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ED'S LETTER

THAT, FRIENDS, WAS 2015. AND WHAT AN ABSOLUTELY cracking (almost) 12 months for film. In such a splendid year, it's fitting that it closes with the title that's provoked more butterflies, gasps and wishing away of time than any other. And we're not just talking this year – more than any film this decade. Yep, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* is upon us. So, as we stand on the brink, let's pause, take a few deep breaths and think about what this means.

I remember the first time I saw *Star Wars*. There was frost on the windows, coal on the fire and I was about eight. It was *The Empire Strikes Back* and, as it filled our telly, I fell in love with Luke and felt a lifelong fear of Vader begin to bloom in my belly. The months that followed were spent sneaking into my older brother's bedroom to lay my hands on his Millennium Falcon while he was out playing football (we don't talk about what could have been had he kept it. It's just too painful). Some of my happiest memories are of sitting cross-legged on the carpet, imagining I was on my way to save Princess Leia. If I try hard enough, I can still feel the tickle of the carpet on my calves.

This is the unifying power of *Star Wars*. It's that most wonderful of things in movies: something that everyone has a memory of, an emotional connection with. It's been passed from father to son, from brother to sister. It's the backdrop of our childhoods. It means something to everyone, and that something may be different from person to person, but Christ, it means *something*.

And while, in this issue, we bring you the best, deepest, most exclusive, most wide-ranging access of any magazine in the world (we really do), what has stayed with me is the stories of what it meant, and still means. From J. J. Abrams and Harrison Ford to John Boyega and Mark Hamill, those who have been with the franchise from the start and those who are new alike, all have a tale of the importance it has played in their life. For some it has *been* their life. But we know that if there is anyone in the world it means more to, it's you. And we want to know your stories. Tweet us @empiremagazine and share your *Star Wars* memories with us with the hashtag #SWmemories. We've already got the tissues ready.

As we prepare to hurtle headfirst into the galaxy far, far away, all that's left to say – in the inimitable words of Chewie – is AARARRGHWWHH!



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EDITED *by* CHRIS HEWITT



FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

NEW STEEL

**ZOOLANDER 2 IS HERE — IT'S ORANGE
MOCHA FRAPPUCCINO TIME!**



ZOOLANDER 2 HAS HAD SO MANY FALSE starts that it seemed the world's dimmest male model would never return. Don't write those eugooglees just yet: 15 years after the original, Derek Zoolander is back. So, why the long wait?

"Honestly," says Ben Stiller, who again directs and stars, "maybe if it had been a big hit when it first came out we would've done a sequel. It took a while for people to actually care!" The first movie, which opened shortly after 9/11 in 2001, grossed just \$61 million globally. But in time it found an audience on DVD, and Stiller started work in earnest on the sequel. "The one thing I wanted to do was take the movie out of the environment it was in before, so it would have its own flavour."

The movie begins with Zoolander in a very different place, following "a big disaster" at the Derek Zoolander Center For Kids Who Can't Read Good And Who Wanna Learn To Do Other Stuff Good Too. "So he leaves society. He just retires from everything, and goes to live on a mountain in extreme northern New Jersey."

How Zoolander and his BFF Hansel (Owen Wilson) get drawn into a Dan Brown-style conspiracy involving notable A-listers remains to be seen, but it involves faces old (Will Ferrell is back as Mugatu, inventor of the piano-key necktie) and new (including Kristen Wiig and Penélope Cruz, seen here as swimsuit-model-turned-Interpol-agent, Montana Grosso).

Stiller admits that he's had fun exploring the impact of ageing on Derek and Hansel, who are, perhaps, not as really, really, ridiculously good-looking as they once were. "The whole movie is predicated on what's been happening for the last 15 years," says Stiller. "Time has gone forward, the fashion world has changed, and they've been forgotten, basically."

One thing that hasn't changed is how often Stiller gets asked to do Zoolander's signature look. "Doing the movie I was in character so much that it became second nature," he laughs. "If someone wanted a picture with me, they'd be like, 'Oh, you're doing Blue Steel,' and I'd be like, 'Sorry.'" **DAMON WISE**

ZOOLANDER 2 IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 12.

They're so hot right now: Hansel (Owen Wilson), Derek Zoolander (Ben Stiller) and Montana Grosso (Penélope Cruz) in *Zoolander 2*.



EXCLUSIVE SET REPORT

VICTORIAN SECRET

Holmes and Watson go back in time
for the *Sherlock* Christmas special



HERE ARE THINGS we could tell you about the new *Sherlock* Christmas special, *The Abominable Bride*. Things you think

you want to know, that would prick the mystery and let all its secrets seep out. But you don't really want to know them. "I have a theory on this, psychologically, because of course I am a doctor," says Mark Gatiss, who is one of *Sherlock*'s creators and not a doctor, as he huddles into a tent away from a flurry of (fake) snow. "When people want the show spoiled. It's called 'anticipointment': that brief moment of euphoria when you find out something you shouldn't, followed by the crash of disappointment that you've ruined it."

Every time a new *Sherlock* episode is announced, the clamour for clues is instant. What's in the title? What does the casting mean? This one is even more confounding than most. On the London set, where snow machines are turning a mild February into squally midwinter, things don't seem quite right. The exterior of 221B Baker Street looks much the same, but the grubby café beneath it has become a genteel tea shop. The people bustling past are in top hats and bonnets. And Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock is, without irony, wearing a deerstalker and a fetching cape. It all looks like an etching from one of Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* books, and not the 21st century show we've come to love over the past few years. What on earth is going on?

"We've been joking since the beginning about whether we could



get away with doing an episode in Victorian dress," says Steven Moffat, *Sherlock*'s co-creator. "Honestly, to do [our Holmes and Watson] with gas lamps and top hats and hansom cabs, as a full-on Gothic treat, is completely irresistible. This is our tenth one and the show's been an unbelievable international success, so we feel like we've earned it."

So *The Abominable Bride* is not a continuation of the last *Sherlock* episode, but a one-off in an alternative, rather stiffer universe — that of the late 1800s.

Benedict Cumberbatch's Holmes, Martin Freeman's Watson and Una Stubbs' Mrs. Hudson as you've never seen them before.

In other words, where and when Conan Doyle's stories were set. That title doesn't appear anywhere in any of Conan Doyle's books, so it seems we're not in for the usual twist on an existing story, but we do know that there are murders, that there's a significant part for John Watson's mysterious wife, Mary (Amanda Abbington), who gets a very sinister intro, and from rooting around the costume department we know there's definitely an actual bride. Abominable status TBC.

What we do know, because we've seen it happen, is this: at some point, Holmes and Watson (Martin Freeman) will walk through the front door of their shared abode and Mrs. Hudson (Una Stubbs) will look at them tersely. Let the conspiracy theories commence.

"My first question was, 'Can I get a haircut?'" says Cumberbatch of his reaction to Moffat and Gatiss' audacious pitch. By way of context, the London-born actor has hated his "ridiculous long curls" since series one. "The second question was, 'Whhhhaatttt?!' I thought they'd lost it. But that was rather like my reaction when I first heard the idea of modernising *Sherlock*. Why fix something that ain't broken? It was very much the same journey with this. I just thought you can't get away with that because it's bonkers. Then the whole thing was explained to me and it's utterly brilliant. It's going to be a lot of fun."

Freeman, who, thanks to the Victorian setting, sports a great big bushy 'tache, had a different take on it.

"I felt like I was hearing about this one as an audience member," he says. "I was excited on behalf of the audience more than I was for myself. It's still basically the same show but just that simple change of perspective is enough to give it a new shot of energy."

For all the joy there is in seeing Sherlock playing dress-up, the arrival of a new episode that doesn't obviously tie in to the current *Sherlock* story does beg the question: When the hell are we going to find out how Moriarty came back from the dead at the end of series three? Series four, we're told, will finally start shooting in "spring". "It is amazingly difficult to pin everyone down," says Freeman. "Everyone's so busy now. So you'll see the next episodes by 2025." Well, since *Sherlock* time travels now, maybe 'Sherlock in the future' wouldn't be the worst idea... **OLLY RICHARDS**

SHERLOCK: THE ABOMINABLE BRIDE
AIRS ON BBC ONE ON JANUARY 1, AND
IS ON DVD AND BLU-RAY FROM JANUARY 11.

FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

THE COHEN BROTHERS

MARK STRONG AND SACHA BARON COHEN
GET THEIR GUNS OUT IN *GRIMSBY*



STATEMENTS OF INTENT GO, LOUIS Leterrier, director of *Grimsby*, roughly the 837th spy movie to be released over the past 12 months, has a doozy. “I loved *Spy*, I loved *Kingsman*, *Mission: Impossible* was really fun,” he says. “But there are certain things in our movie that cannot be in any of these movies. It’s beyond anything that’s been committed to film.”

Given that *Kingsman* ended with heads exploding to the tune of Elgar’s *Pomp & Circumstance*, that’s saying something. But when you consider that Sacha Baron Cohen is the star, co-writer and producer of *Grimsby*, then maybe Leterrier might not be bluffing. Cohen, after all, is no stranger to committing outrageous acts to celluloid. “Sacha just pushes the envelope,” says co-star Mark Strong. “I’m sure everyone will manage to be offended by something or other.”

The story sees Cohen play Nobby Butcher, a warm-hearted, England football team-loving father of eight who lives in Grimsby with his girlfriend (Rebel Wilson). The only blight on his life: he was separated from his brother, Sebastian, when he was a kid, and he’s been looking for him ever since. When a tip finally leads him to his brother, he learns the astonishing truth: Sebastian Butcher is now super-spy Sebastian Graves (Strong). “When James Bond fails they call this guy,” laughs Leterrier. “But Nobby shows up, messes up Sebastian’s mission and now they’re on the run, dragging each other through mud. And other substances.”

Leterrier says *Grimsby* is three movies in one. There’s the hardcore action movie (“Sometimes you have to cover your eyes, it’s so real”) with POV sequences showing off Strong’s spy skills. There’s the comedy, of course, and then there’s the story of two chalk-and-cheese brothers. “You don’t want to shock just to shock,” adds Leterrier. “You want to tell an emotional story, too. It’s the Sacha I love — there’s a bite to it, but deep inside the character is very sweet.”

The movie has copped flak from Grimsby residents, fearful that the film will bring dishonour upon the Humberside town. “There’s nothing to fear. It’s not condescending,” says Leterrier, using a word that means “having an attitude of patronising superiority”. “What we’re saying is Grimsby is a community, and London is not. They should be proud of the movie!” **CHRIS HEWITT**

GRIMSBY IS OUT ON FEBRUARY 26.





Mark Strong and Sacha Baron Cohen are Sebastian and Nobby, the Butcher Brothers, in *Grimsby*.

ON THE RADAR



Noomi Rapace might play the great Amy Winehouse. Rapace can do accents and her name half-rhymes with "Amy". Sold.



Sony is hoping to adapt the new Lisbeth Salander book, *The Girl In The Spider's Web*, with actual Swede Alicia Vikander in the role.



Duncan Jones' passion project, the sci-fi *Mute*, has bagged its stars: Alexander Skarsgård, Sam Rockwell and Paul Rudd.



Liam Neeson is Deep Throat? Not Linda Lovelace. Instead, he'll be Mark Felt, aka the guy who took down Tricky Dick, in *Felt*.

Five Things WILL POULTER



1

→ HE HAD THE TIME OF HIS LIFE ON *THE REVENANT*

"I'd get on a plane to Canada and do it all again tomorrow," says Will Poulter of shooting Alejandro G. Iñárritu's survival Western. "You'd wake up, travel several hours up a mountain, rehearse all day on an absolutely amazing camera shot, and capture it with only 15 minutes left. It was exciting."

2

→ HE'S AN OLD-TIME PA

Poulter plays Jim Bridger, who helps Leonardo DiCaprio's fur trapper, Hugh Glass, in his quest for revenge after Glass is left for dead. Poulter describes Bridger as "a PA of the 1800s: 'You have to shoot a beaver at midday, Hugh.'" He pauses. "That's terrible. You'd be trapping a beaver, not shooting it. My knowledge has gone already!"

3

→ HE'S NOT A CLOWN

The 22-year-old's big break came as Kenny in *We're The Millers*, in which his bollocks were bitten by a spider. Predictably he was offered countless similar roles afterwards but, "In my eyes, I'm not an actor if I can't do anything different to Kenny. I love comedy, but not as much as I love drama."

4

→ REALLY, HE'S NOT A CLOWN

Poulter was cast as Pennywise, the ancient alien spider-clown villain in Cary Fukunaga's mooted adaptation of Stephen King's *It*. But when Fukunaga exited the project, so too did Poulter. "My loyalties had to be with Cary. His vision for *It* was brilliant, dark, really layered and original. I'm gutted it's not happening."

5

→ HE'S A NATURAL MIMIC

Poulter's CV boasts several superb American accents. "I just wanted to be like my dad," he says. "He can do most accents. I don't know if I'm good at accents, but I know I annoyed a lot of people doing them at school." **CH**

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MAY THE FORCE BE WITH THEM

TINA FEY AND AMY POEHLER ARE TAKING ON THE EMPIRE

WHAT DO YOU DO when you're brave enough to come out close to the new *Star Wars*? What can you offer to compete with a Millennium Falcon, \$300 million-worth of CGI and a little rolly robot that goes 'bloop'? "Well", says Tina Fey, star of *Sisters*, which is coming out just five days before *The Force Awakens*, "we've got the 'New Kids On The Block', 'The Cabbage Patch', the 'typewriter'. I think there's also a 'Roger Rabbit' in there." Suck on that, Kylo Ren.

Fey is referring to the moves that she and close friend and collaborator Amy Poehler have displayed, for the past four hours, on the set of *Sisters*. Moves

that might just take Han Solo down.

For their first film together since 2008's *Baby Mama*, Poehler and Fey are playing siblings Maura and Jane, one over-achieving and uptight, the other perhaps a little too loose. When their parents (Dianne Wiest and James Brolin) announce they're selling their childhood home, the sisters decide that they will throw one last house party to bid farewell to their old lives. *Empire* has come to New York to witness a part of this shindig, as Poehler and Fey bust moves, in a completely trashed bungalow surrounded by roaring fortysomethings, to *Informer*, the 'classic' song by Snow. It is a thing to behold. A lickety boom-boom down, indeed.

Given how popular their pairing has been, from *SNL* to the Golden





Globes, it's surprising it's taken Fey and Poehler so long to team up again on screen. "We like to make a film together every seven years, without fail," says Poehler. "It's like a Michael Apter project," adds Fey. "Actually," continues Poehler, "working on projects has kind of become the only way we can see each other."

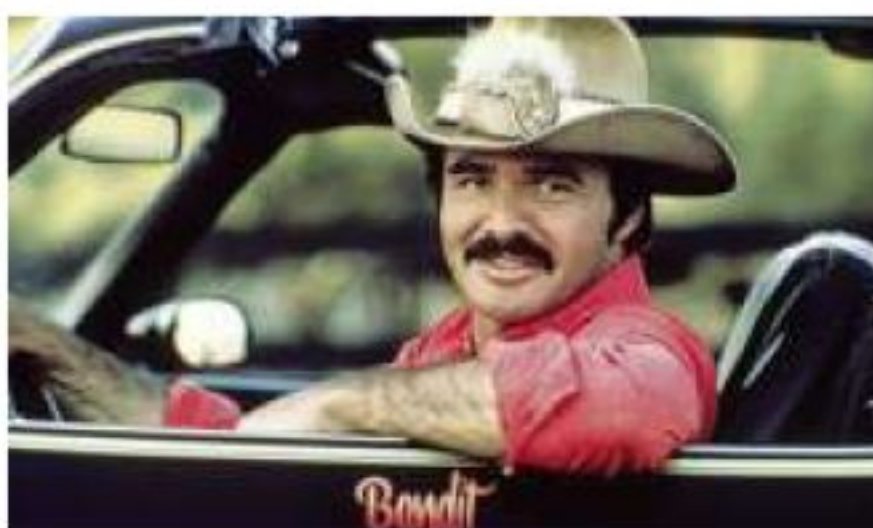
So now we just have to wait until 2022 for their next film. "Oh, it's the film four out from now that you wanna see," says Fey. "That one's going to be rough." Poehler laughs. "By that time it will just be us sitting in a coffee shop and staring at each other." And probably duking it out with *Episode XIII*. **OLLY RICHARDS**

Above: Comedy siblings Tina Fey and Amy Poehler in *Sisters*. **Left:** Throwing that one last house party. What could go wrong?

SISTERS IS OUT ON DECEMBER 18.

THE COUNTER-PROGRAMMING COUNTER

SISTERS ISN'T THE FIRST MOVIE TO TEST ITS METTLE AGAINST THE MIGHT OF THE FORCE. HOW DID OTHERS FARE ON OPENING WEEKEND?



SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT (1977)

Star Wars was seen as something of an under-ewok compared to *Smokey And The Bandit*. But it was a sensation, beating Burt into second place for the year.

A New Hope: \$2 million
Smokey And The Bandit: \$1.7 million



THE LOVE LETTER (1999)

May 1999. *The Phantom Menace* is perhaps the most anticipated movie of all time. *The Love Letter*, starring Tom Selleck, is not. It's hardly a fair fight.

The Phantom Menace: \$64.8 million
The Love Letter: \$2.7 million



THE SHINING (1980)

Hollywood still hadn't got the memo about *Star Wars* by May 1980. Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* became the first sacrificial lamb for the series.

The Empire Strikes Back: \$7.2 million
The Shining: \$622,337



ABOUT A BOY (2002)

Although *Clones* took a post-*Phantom Menace* dip, the Force was still plenty strong with it. It gobbled up Hugh Grant's *About A Boy*, and spat it out.

Attack Of The Clones: \$80 million
About A Boy: \$8.6 million



CHAINED HEAT (1983)

With *Jedi* slaying all comers in its first week, only Paul Nicolas' prison drama, *Chained Heat*, was brave enough to stand up to the Skywalkers. Now *that's* counter-programming.

Return Of The Jedi: \$41.1 million
Chained Heat: \$2.3 million



DOMINION: A PREQUEL TO THE EXORCIST (2005)

The 'final' *Star Wars* movie was such an event, the only other new entry, Paul Schrader's ill-fated *Exorcist* prequel, was at no. 23.

Revenge Of The Sith: \$108.4 million
Dominion: Prequel To The Exorcist: \$140,703

THE BEASTIE BOY

FIRST LOOK!

EDDIE REDMAYNE HEADS UP FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM, AKA THE NEW HARRY POTTER



IZARDS WIZARDING. DAVID YATES AT the helm. J. K. Rowling at the keyboard. *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* begs the question: when is a *Harry Potter* film not a *Harry Potter* film?

The answer: when Harry Potter isn't in it. And, as *Fantastic Beasts* is set in 1926, almost seven decades before Harry first stroked his wand in anger, don't expect to see Daniel Radcliffe running around here.

Instead, *Fantastic Beasts* centres on Newton Artemis Fido Scamander — or Newt for short. Played by Eddie Redmayne, he's a young magizoologist (think Chris Packham meets David Copperfield) who arrives in New York with his magical hand luggage, which contains a variety of strange animals he's gathered on his travels around the world. Unfortunately, some of the creatures soon escape, plunging Newt into an extraordinary adventure as he tries to recover them.

After *Harry Potter And The Deathly Hallows — Part 2*, Warner Bros. was in something of a quandary. *Potter* is still insanely popular, of course (tickets for *Harry Potter And The Cursed Child*, the Rowling-penned play that will pick up Harry's story as an adult, sold out in minutes), but there were no more books to mine. Well, almost.

In 2001, Rowling wrote a slim volume called *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them*. 'Written' by Scamander, it was a fun companion piece to the Potterverse, but seemingly little more. Until 2013, when Warner Bros. announced that it was using the book as a basis for a new trilogy, with Rowling herself penning the script. The emphasis here seems to be on fun, with Potter veteran Yates exploring a very different tone. With a cracking cast — Colin Farrell, Katherine Waterston, Ezra Miller and Ron Perlman are also on board — a new franchise is born. Expecto blockbusterum? **CHRIS HEWITT**

FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM IS OUT ON NOVEMBER 18.

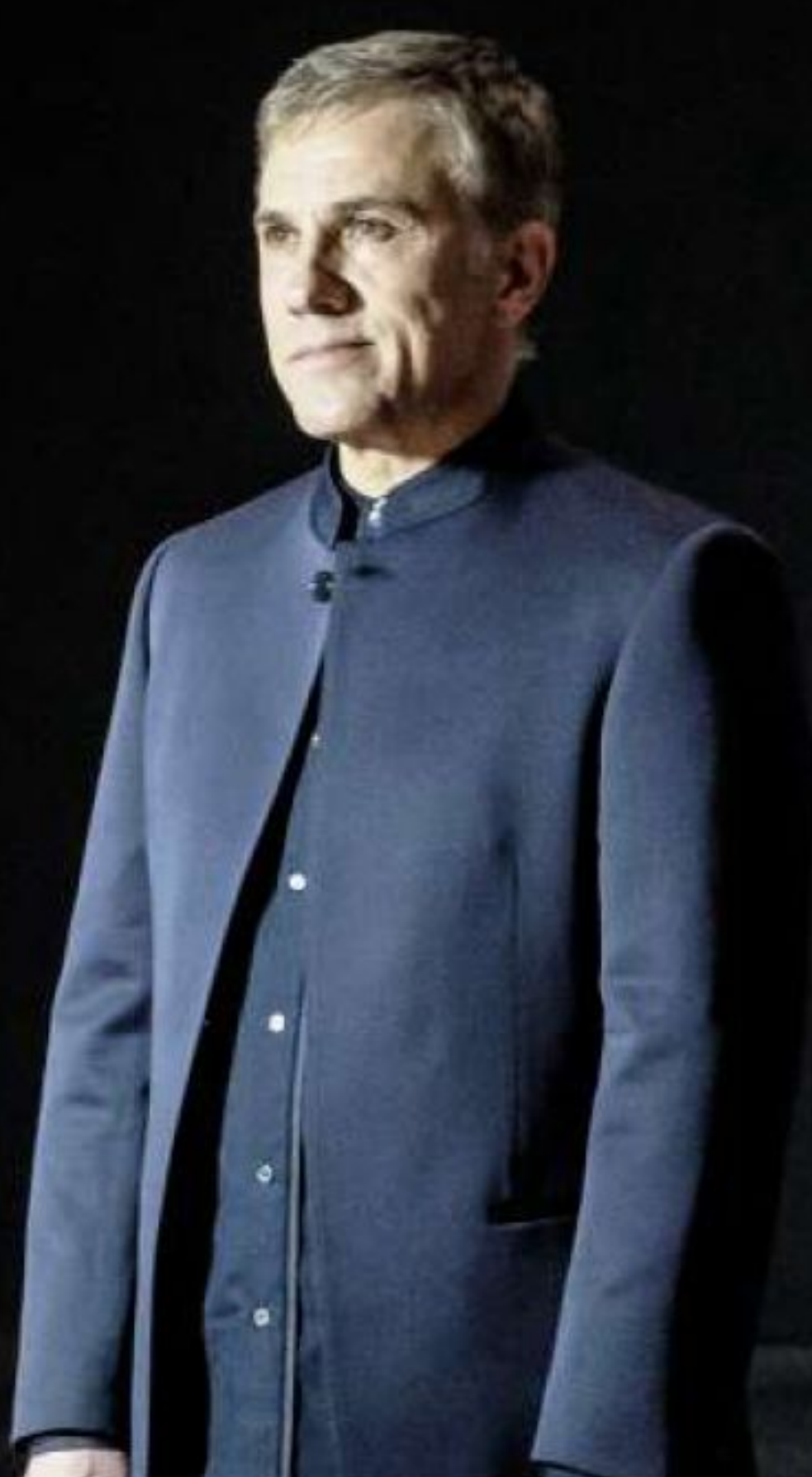


▼
The Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them book was written by Rowling for Comic Relief. It's just 42 pages long.

007 SPECTRE SECRETS

AS TOLD TO US BY M
HIMSELF, SAM MENDES

EMPIRE
SPOILER
ALERT!



1

001 Mendes wanted Blofeld for Skyfall

So, the Persian cat's out of the bag. After months of *Spectre*-related subterfuge, Christoph Waltz's Franz Oberhauser, to the surprise of nobody, was revealed as über-nemesis Ernst Stavro Blofeld. Yet, if Mendes had had his druthers, he'd have introduced Blofeld earlier. "We talked about it on the last movie (*Skyfall*), whether it was worth it or even possible," he told *Empire*. "I had always loved the idea, but couldn't work out how to make it anything more than a character turning up with the name Blofeld." At the time it was impossible, due to a legal battle with the estate of *Thunderball* producer Kevin McClory, which held the rights to SPECTRE and Blofeld. That cleared up just after *Spectre* went into development.

002 The Name's Wocky... Jabberwocky

Mendes revealed that early conversations with Waltz about Blofeld centred around an unlikely source of material. "We quoted back and forth to each other by email the *Jabberwocky*, Lewis Carroll's poem." Look carefully as Bond and Madeleine Swann sift through Mr. White's secret room in Tangier, and you'll see a drawing of the Jabberwock on the wall. It may seem an unlikely reference, but when you hear 'all mimsy were the borogoves/ and the mome raths outgrabe', how can you think of anything but Bond?

003 Blofeld's cat lives!

The first clear nod that Oberhauser is Blofeld comes when Bond awakens after



4



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being knocked out to find a very familiar pussy lazing around. Minutes later, Blofeld's secret desert lair is engulfed in flame, using up most of, but not all, the moggy's lives. "It doesn't even get a singe," laughs Mendes. "It's doing its business outside." PETA will be relieved.

004 Blofeld wasn't always the Big Bad

The film's tertiary villain is Andrew Scott's Denbigh, a techno-savvy MI5 wonk willing to sell out Queen and country. That's something of a demotion from previous drafts of the *Spectre* script. "There was a long period where it flipped and it turned out that he was the person who was running the show."

005 We Know Who 009 Is

The Aston Martin DB10 (co-designed by Mendes) that Bond, essentially, nicks and then destroys in Rome was intended — Sinatra soundtrack and all — for the hapless 009. We never glimpse the unfortunate agent, but Mendes told us who he would cast if the opportunity arose. "You can lay a trail of clues," he laughed. Okay, then: the actor has been previously linked with the role of Bond, his wife once appeared in a Bond movie, he's best known for his work on US TV, and he's got a lovely head of red hair.

006 The Truth About The Opening Shot(s)

The film opens with a stunning four-and-a-half-minute tracking shot. "It's actually four shots morphed together," says Mendes of the sequence, which blends shots filmed in Mexico City and on a Pinewood soundstage. "I challenge you to spot them." We'll give you one: there's a wipe as an extra walks across camera when Bond walks into his hotel room.

007 Craig Not Bond

The movie ends with Bond driving off into the sunset (or, more accurately, early-morning London traffic), with Léa Seydoux's Madeleine by his side. The clear implication: his licence to kill might be about to expire. Craig, who has an option for one more movie, has said this might be his last. "If he chooses to sign off with this movie, he's doing so in style," says Mendes. "I wanted Bond to decide to leave. To me, when he turns around at the end and says, 'I've got something better to do,' he means it." **CHRIS HEWITT**

SPECTRE IS OUT NOW. TO HEAR MORE MENDES, CHECK OUT THE SPECTRE PODCAST AT WWW.EMPIREONLINE.COM.

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WorldMags.net

FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE!

HO-HO-HO

BILL MURRAY USHERS IN THE FESTIVE SEASON WITH A VERY MURRAY CHRISTMAS

OLLYWOOD doesn't have the greatest relationship with variety shows, as anyone unfortunate enough to seek out the dignity-digesting sarlacc that is the *Star Wars Holiday Special* will attest. Undaunted, however, Netflix is entering the fray this season with possibly the greatest gift of them all: Bill Murray.

It's hard to say exactly how *A Very Murray Christmas* will end up, since the busy elves in Netflix's streaming workshop are keeping the whole thing under wraps. But this we know: it's part old-school variety special, as Murray puts on a Christmas show at The Carlyle hotel in New York with a few of his closest celebrity chums; and, as it's Bill Murray, part meta-commentary on an old-school variety special. There will be singing, courtesy of Phoenix and Miley Cyrus. There will be dancing. There will be cameos from a coterie of Murray's celebrity chums, including Amy Poehler, Chris Rock and Jason Schwartzman. Oh, and there will be George Clooney, in a tux, popping his head out from behind a cheap Christmas tree to join in with the merriment. "Every single person in it just absolutely did something they'd never done before," Murray said recently. "They reached a level in themselves that I'd never seen."

Murray, Hollywood's favourite wacky uncle, hasn't been this Christmassy since 1988's *Scrooged*. And he hopes that this year's special will reawaken the festive spirit he experienced as a child. "Christmas was just waking up and



feeling that feeling of, 'Oh my God, life is good,'" recalled Murray. "It was a free zone. Everybody's in a good mood."

The variety show also marks a reunion for Murray with Sofia Coppola, who's directing, for the first time since *Lost In Translation*. Maybe, if we're all good boys and girls, we'll finally find out what he whispered to Scarlett Johansson at the end of that movie... Our money's on, "Let's have a turkey sarnie and get in the queue for the Next sale." **CHRIS HEWITT**

A VERY MURRAY CHRISTMAS IS ON NETFLIX FROM DECEMBER 4.



2



1



3



4

- 1 Murray with Paul Shaffer, Clooney and... Miley Cyrus.
- 2 Amy Poehler comforts Murray backstage.
- 3 Murray and Chris Rock croon for Christmas.
- 4 Murray and his celeb chums round the old Joanna.



DO IT IN 60 SECONDS

Last year's DISS winner shows you how



IF YOU'RE A budding Burton, or a fledgling Fincher, and you *haven't* yet entered this year's Jameson Empire

Done In 60 Seconds competition, the short film contest that asks you to remake any film you like in just one minute, then take heart.

Not just because there's still plenty of time, but because we asked last year's winning director, Oliver Jones, for a DISS masterclass.

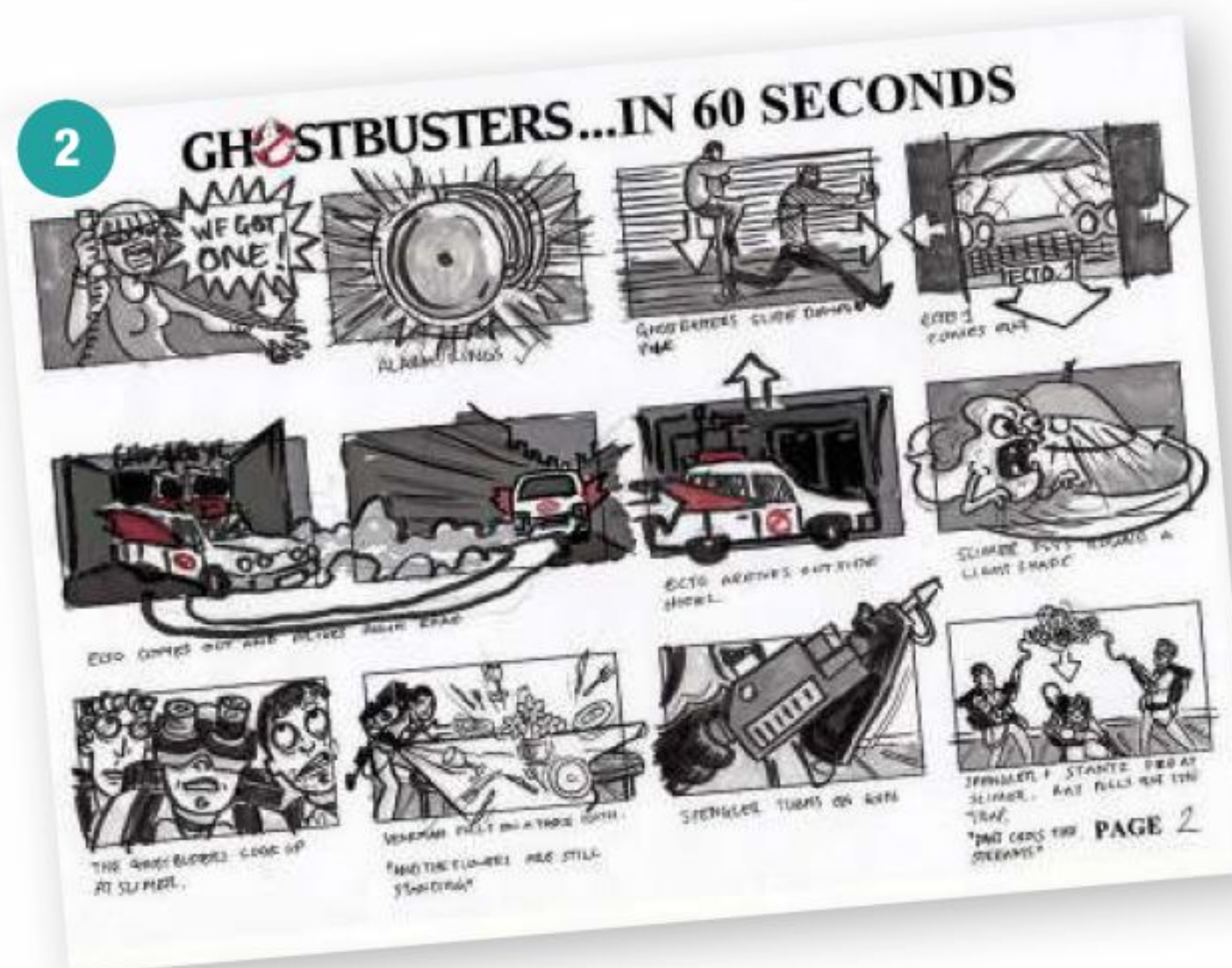
Jones, and his co-director Rob Kenyon, adapted Ivan Reitman's *Ghostbusters* for his winning entry, compressing the 105-minute original into a single minute of lo-fi cinema. All films, of course, start with a screenplay, and so should it be for Done In 60 Seconds. In the end, Jones whittled *Ghostbusters* down to a six-page screenplay incorporating most of

the film's iconic moments. "I mostly chose all the moments that would be fun for me to make as a filmmaker," he says. "Scripting took about an hour! But getting all those sequences packed in was tough."

If you're now feeling suitably inspired, and wish to enter this year's competition, there's plenty of time. The deadline for entries is January 14, 2016.

The winner of this year's Jameson Empire Done In 60 Seconds will get two tickets to next year's Jameson Empire Awards, a trophy to pop onto the mantelpiece of their choice, and the chance to travel to Los Angeles, California, to take part in the Jameson First Shot weekender. Flights, hotels and transfers are included.

So, what are you waiting for? Get cracking on your mini-masterpieces and upload them to jamesonempirediss.com. Remember to be as ambitious and eye-catching as you dare...



1 The real fake Ghostbusters. 2 Jones' meticulous storyboards. 3 Building the Ghostbusters' HQ. 4 and 5 The team's proton packs were assembled using cutting-edge technology. 6 Slimer on a stick? Building the little green guy out of Plasticine. 7 Jones and his team didn't shy away from attempting special FX.



3



4



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6



7

SCRIPT NOTES

DISS 2015 CHAMP OLIVER JONES EXPLAINS HOW HE TOOK THE TROPHY

3.

INT. GHOSTBUSTERS HQ

Ray grabs the CV from Winston and hands him a fresh Trap.

RAY:
Welcome aboard.

EXT. FOUNTAIN

Peter meets up with Dana.

PETER
Wanna go on a date?

DANA
No!

PETER
How about we go on a date?

DANA
Ok!

Peter spins away.

INT. GHOSTBUSTERS HQ

DA Walter Peck talks to Venkman.

PECK
I want to see your containment unit.

PETER
You didn't say the magic word.

Downstairs Ray places a trap into the containment unit.

EGON
(Eating a large twinkie)
I'm worried Ray, it's getting crowded in there.

WINSTON
That's a big Twinkie!

EXT. DANAS APARTMENT

Lighting hits the building, the eyes of the two pug statues on top start to glow.

Dana is attacked by arms coming from her chair

Louis is chased by a giant pug.

(CONTINUED)

Here, Jones boils down a movie's worth of flirting between Peter Venkman and Dana Barrett to a few lines. "The Peter and Dana relationship is essential. It's what connects the film together. But the original scene alone is four times longer than our entire film!"

One of many direct nods to the original script. "Doing this is something that will draw viewers to your movie, as it's something they will recognise. People are eager to hear your interpretations of various lines or key sequences."

"There are several references to Twinkies in *Ghostbusters*," explains Jones. "Sadly, this one didn't make the cut of our film. Plenty of other great lines had to go due to time constraints. Murder your darlings!"

Jones wrote a lot of FX sequences into his no-budget movie. "I relish the chance to make and create things. I tend to put all the effects in my script so I don't forget them when I'm shooting. Don't be daunted by it, just see it as a problem that needs solving."

The Terror Dogs have been downgraded in stature, upgraded in cuteness. "Pugs look demonic with their big, bulging eyes and snarly yap," laughs Jones. "My friend Nicola has a little pug called Brutus, and was gracious enough to let us film him. It's all gone to his head now!"



Star Wars: The Force Awakens



Mad Max: Fury Road

JAMESON® EMPIRE AWARDS 2016



Me and Earl and The Dying Girl

THE VOTES AWAKEN

THE JAMESON EMPIRE AWARDS ARE COMING AND THEY'RE BIGGER THAN EVER



HEY'RE BACK! AS inevitable as death and taxes, but infinitely more entertaining, the Jameson Empire Awards — the most laidback, fun and

irreverent movie awards ceremony on the planet — are back back back. And while not new, they're certainly improved.

This year, we've added a host of new categories to the Awards, which recognise achievements in both the technical arts and outside the arena of film, and we want you to help choose the winners.

It's been a huge year for film at the box office, and we'd imagine that the blockbuster quintet of *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Spectre* and *Jurassic World* will do battle for the major categories (possibly levelling a small building in the process). But

with the new categories, smaller fare like *The Duke Of Burgundy*, *It Follows*, *Crimson Peak* and *Me And Earl And The Dying Girl* — the Davids to Hollywood's Goliaths — should have a chance to make an impact too.

The choice is yours, and said choice has never been greater. Remember — *you* are shaping the shortlist from which the final awards will be decided. No pressure, then. Make your selections online at www.empireonline.com/awards. You have until Friday February 12, 2016, to cast your vote. As an added incentive, everyone who does so will be entered into a draw to win a pair of tickets to the Awards, which will take place on Sunday March 20, 2016, at a top London venue. May the odds be ever in your favour.



THE CATEGORIES

BEST FILM

BEST MALE NEWCOMER

BEST FEMALE NEWCOMER

BEST SCI-FI/FANTASY

BEST HORROR

BEST COMEDY

PRESENTED BY ABSOLUTE RADIO

BEST BRITISH FILM

JAMESON BEST ACTOR

BEST ACTRESS

BEST DIRECTOR

BEST SCREENPLAY

BEST ANIMATED FILM

BEST THRILLER

PRESENTED BY CORINTHIA HOTEL LONDON

BEST DOCUMENTARY

BEST SOUNDTRACK

BEST COSTUME DESIGN

BEST MAKE-UP AND HAIRSTYLING

BEST VISUAL EFFECTS

BEST SHORT FILM

BEST PRODUCTION DESIGN

BEST TV SERIES/ TV GAMECHANGER

BEST GAME



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FIRST LOOK EXCLUSIVE

BANG BANG BANG BANG

GOSLING AND CROWE ARE
SHANE BLACK'S *THE NICE GUYS*



IT'S A PERFECT SHANE Black situation," says producer Joel Silver of *The Nice Guys*. And Silver should know — he's presided over a few.

The first was 1987's *Lethal Weapon*, and the last was Black's brilliant directorial debut, *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*, back in 2005. Now the duo have reteamed for *The Nice Guys*, a buddy-buddy action comedy which taps into Black's obsession with the seedy detective novels he'd spend his lunch money on at school.

"When I'm directing this action scene, I'm thinking 'I've seen this as a kid on the cover of *The Executioner #19: Detroit Deathwatch!*'" laughs Black. The scene in question, with an Atlanta hotel standing in for Downtown LA and the Pacific Auto Show 1978 (this is Black's first period piece), is third-act real estate, so we'll be vague, but it involves Russell Crowe's Jackson Healy and Ryan Gosling's Holland March chasing a suitably MacGuffiny MacGuffin while bullets fly, smoke fills the air and women in glitzy gowns abandon their half-drunk Martinis. There's also a fair amount of none-more-Black banter between the leads.

"It's a character-based action movie," explains Silver. "Russell's the serious, tough guy and Ryan is the morally ambiguous detective. When you see them, it's magic. People think it's Butch and Sundance. I say they're like Laurel and Hardy, or Abbott and Costello!" Or, perhaps, Riggs and Murtaugh. Joe Hallenbeck and Jimmy Dix. Harry Lockhart and Gay Perry. You get the gist.

"This is what Joel and Shane do best," says Gosling, sporting a porn-star 'tache and a plaster cast on one arm. "If *Lethal Weapon* and *48 Hours* had a kid and he lost his virginity while *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang* was on the TV, this movie would be that." In other words, it's a perfect Shane Black situation. **EB**

THE NICE GUYS IS OUT ON JUNE 3.

What is your favourite animal?

A sea otter. Because they look so damn cute.

What were you in your first school play?

I was a dragonfly in first grade. It may have been *Alice Through The Looking Glass*.

How much is a pint of milk? What does that mean? I know what a pint of beer looks like, so it's probably the same.

So how much is a pint of beer? About as much as a pint of milk!

What is your earliest memory? The first one that comes to mind is when I was three. I slid down a slide at a local park and sliced my chin open. I bled profusely and my father took me to the doctor for stitches. Strangely, it seems like many people have a scar on their chin for whatever reason.

What is your nickname? It hasn't gotten more complicated than versions of Pine — Pine Tree, Piney, Pinet...

What is your favourite video game? I don't like them. I haven't had a console since probably the early Nintendo. I remember all my friends loved *Zelda* and I was horrendous at it, so I gave up.

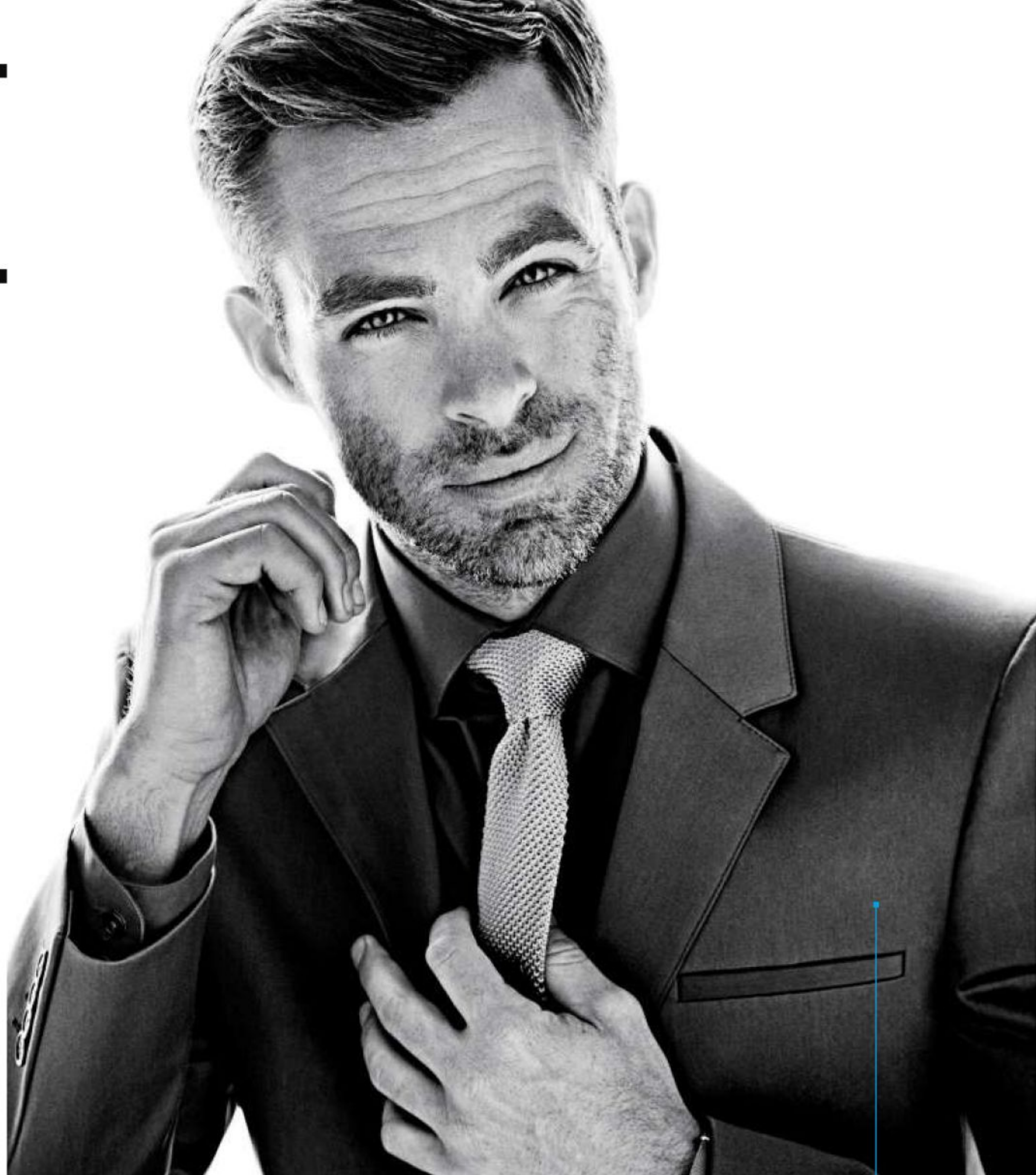
What's your favourite word in the English language? Spontaneity.

What's the strangest place you've ever thrown up? I was a freshman in high school and I finally got invited to a senior party. I threw up in the person's parents' bedroom on their shag carpet.

What is the best thing about your home town? Mexican food. I want to give a shout out to Tacos Delta in Los Angeles, on Sunset Boulevard. It's my first stop after I get off a plane.

On a scale of one to ten, how hairy is your arse? Thankfully, not even a one. I don't have a hairy arse.

Which film have you seen more than any other? *Bugsy Malone*, with Jodie Foster and Scott Baio. There was a video store in the San Fernando Valley called



HOW MUCH IS A PINT OF MILK?

Chris Pine

THE FINEST HOURS STAR ON STEALING LAUNDRY BAGS, BUGSY MALONE AND THROWING UP

PORTRAIT NINO MUNOZ

Odyssey Video. My mom got it for me — I was on a big '40s kick, I loved fedoras and stuff like that. It's such a creative, imaginative movie. A fuckin' great film.

What would the title of your autobiography be? *A Snowball's Chance In Hell*.

What's the worst injury you've ever had as a grown-up? Probably breaking my finger during *Jack Ryan*. It was the sound of it that was so gnarly, just hearing it snap. I was trying to hit a large man in a fake way and accidentally connected. He was fine!

What is the best thing you've stolen from a hotel? A laundry bag from The Bowery Hotel in New York. I stay there all the time, so hopefully I've made up for it. I needed a bag, and it said "laundry" on it. I thought that was kind of funny.

Who is the most famous person in your phone book? Probably Chiwetel Ejiofor.

Does he text you back quickly? No! He's an award nominee, I'm not...
JAMES WHITE

THE FINEST HOURS IS OUT ON JANUARY 29.

DID YOU KNOW?

— He auditioned for the role of Jake in *Avatar*.

— He spent a year studying at Leeds University.

— His actor father Robert played Sgt. Joseph Getraer on *CHiPs*.



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SKYFALL

THE EMPIRE MOVIE GUIDE | UNMISSABLE ★★ EXCELLENT ★★ GOOD ★★ POOR ★★ TRAGIC ★



Spectre

★★★★★

OUT NOW / CERT. 12A / 148 MINS.

DIRECTOR Sam Mendes

CAST Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Léa Seydoux, Ralph Fiennes, Ben Whishaw, Naomie Harris, Monica Bellucci

PLOT British spy James Bond (Craig) discovers that a vast terrorist group has been behind several villains he has faced in the past. With MI6 under threat from homegrown bureaucracy, Bond has to strike out alone against SPECTRE.



HAVING HANDLED *Skyfall*, the 50th-anniversary 007 entry, Sam Mendes is back for a direct sequel to the earlier film which also picks up story

threads (and the odd character) from *Casino Royale* and *Quantum Of Solace*, and retcons Daniel Craig's run as James Bond into one slightly wonky super-saga. In effect, this is Craig's *You Only Live Twice*, down to the welcome return of the white cat of evil, revealing that there's always been one villain behind the hero's woes. The £41.7 million UK take in its first week, beating out *Harry Potter And The Prisoner Of Azkaban's*



record, would suggest that this return to core values that started with *Skyfall* is finding favour.

After three films more rooted in real-world worries than Pierce Brosnan's mostly fantastical vehicles, *Spectre* gets more bizarre, despite editorial about the relevance of licensed-to-kill boots on the ground in an age of drone espionage. After the deaths of four girlfriends and one surrogate mother, Craig's hardman-in-a-suit hero is finally allowed fun. When a beautiful woman mentions that the astonishing scenery (and art direction) of her mountaintop clinic can be a distraction, Craig's smooth throwaway as he focuses intently on her ("Really? I hadn't noticed") draws

The M&S mixed relay team dropped the baton. Again.

a laugh only he could get. Roger Moore would have arched an eyebrow, but Craig is funny because he doesn't wink at the audience. He can also turn off the charm when it's time to throw someone through a window.

Skyfall, a knowing victory lap for the series, took Bond home to his grim childhood home but also — with Ralph Fiennes as a new M and Naomie Harris at Miss Money Penny's desk — to the sitcom-like status quo circa *Dr. No*. *Spectre* plays by established rules rather than break or radically overhaul them, and frankly gets a little baggy between set-pieces. A ludicrous backstory that links Bond's unhappy childhood with the villain's scheme feels contrived — as if

subverting democracy worldwide and massive terrorist attacks weren't evil enough to annoy the hero into fighting. *Skyfall* had genuine surprises, but this reverts to the expected — the one 'reveal' is too close to a trick played last time to fool you again.

Other elements are rote: the tentacular title sequence is cool but the song is a dud; Dave Bautista's Oddjob-like silent, smirking thug is formidable in a *From Russia With Love* fight-on-a-train but otherwise a formula goon; Léa Seydoux works wonders with thin material as one of the more passive Bond girls (her job is to be imperilled and rescued), and Monica Bellucci is in and out with little chance to show her fire. ➤



A couple of the car chases — through weirdly depopulated nighttime cities — are oddly frictionless, and the one major gadget turns out to be a get-out-of-certain-death-free card on a par with the invisible car and the hover-gondola.

However, although *Spectre* is less satisfying overall than *Skyfall*, some sequences rank with Bond's best. The pre-credits set-piece, with a skull-masked Bond in Mexico City during the Day Of The Dead opens with a *Touch Of Evil* long tracking shot that's a stunner (Daniel Craig just walking briskly across precarious rooftops with style is a thrilling spectacle), and delivers a definitive struggle-inside-an-out-of-control-helicopter climax most films would save for a finale. After such things have been out of fashion for a while, it's great to see SPECTRE back in business — with a crowded evil business meeting in Rome and a spectacular evil desert lair on Tunisia, inhabited by a mercurially nasty, whimsical, overconfident chairman (Christoph Waltz) who wipes away the taint of Dr. Evil and matches the amusing menace of Donald Pleasence or Gert Fröbe.

Craig had a less tough job at the start than Fiennes does here, taking over from the most-beloved M in the series (Judi Dench) and entering the superspy arena



without reminding you that he was in the Avengers film we don't talk about. M gets his own subplot, clashing with a slick new spymaster (Andrew Scott) whose wrong'un status is affirmed when it's mentioned he was "at school with the Home Secretary". Ben Whishaw's Q is also a gem, reminding Bond that some civil servants have mortgages and cats to look after while he's rushing around the world having high adventures. Harris, however, has a better role in the

Top: SPECTRE assembles.

Above: No-one sent Bond the dress-code memo.

tie-in mobile phone ad than this film, reinforcing the sense that this is one for the boys rather than a crossover like *Casino Royale* or *Skyfall*. **KIM NEWMAN**

VERDICT If this is to be Craig's last bow as 007, he'll be remembered for bringing Ian Fleming's grit back to one of the great British film franchises. Kudos to Mendes, Craig, Waltz, Fiennes and the location-finder. But could we please get a hummable song next time.

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Victor Frankenstein

★★★★

OUT DECEMBER 3 / CERT. 12A / 110 MINS.

DIRECTOR Paul McGuigan

CAST James McAvoy, Daniel Radcliffe, Jessica Brown Findlay, Andrew Scott

PLOT Victorian London. Trainee physician Victor Frankenstein (McAvoy) recruits a circus hunchback (Radcliffe) to assist him with experiments designed to create life from death. Much to the ire of God-fearing copper Inspector Turpin (Scott).



LASSIC LITERARY works like Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein* will be subject to all kinds of interpretation. James Whale's 1931

masterpiece went wildly off-book and defined cinema's long relationship with the text, and the past few years alone have seen adaptations both faithful (Kenneth Branagh's 1994 version, Bernard Rose's 2015 take) and loose

(*I, Frankenstein*, *Penny Dreadful*'s heady stew). And now here's Max 'Chronicle' Landis and Paul 'Sherlock' McGuigan, aiming to do for Victor Frankenstein what Guy Ritchie did for Sherlock Holmes, set in the past but with a playful, postmodern sensibility that zaps new life into Shelley's 200 year-old Gothic masterpiece.

Although the film takes its name from the student doctor (James McAvoy) whose infernal experiments jolt a corpse to life using that new-fangled electricity, we enter Victor's world through the haunted, stage-painted eyes of a hunchback clown (Daniel Radcliffe), who moonlights as the circus sawbones. After a daring escape — and a bit of toe-curlingly nasty boil-draining business — this nameless wretch is given the name 'Igor' (after Victor's absent roommate, who has vanished in mysterious circumstances) and put to work helping Victor with his stated ambition to build a living being from dead tissue. Enter obsidian-eyed flatfoot Inspector Turpin (Andrew Scott, TV's Moriarty), who suspects "evil, sinful mischief" on the part of Victor and his new assistant, and sets out to end their blasphemous exploits.

Landis' script wittily addresses the ethical dilemmas of progressive science and the inherent blasphemy of man playing God — and there's wicked-smart

"Is it hot in here or is it me?"

stuff about whether history will remember the name 'Frankenstein' as being synonymous with the man or the monster. It helps that McGuigan's steampunk staging is brought to life with real sets and practical effects, but it's the actors who work hardest to sell the reboot: Radcliffe strikes just the right tone as Victor's acolyte-turned-conscience, although he is always at risk of being swallowed whole by McAvoy's shouty, spittle-flecked performance, the kind that might give Al Pacino or Brian Blessed pause. On the downside, it's perhaps ten minutes too long, there's one villain too many (Freddie Fox's foppish Finnegan largely superfluous), and, as is often the case with bromances, the female role (Jessica Brown Findlay's trapeze artist, Lorelei) appears to exist largely to deflect suspicions that Victor and Igor only have eyes for each other (not counting the eyes in formaldehyde, of course). But these are minor gripes: from *Moulin Rouge*-esque opening to fire-and-brimstone finale, it's a ripping yarn genetically engineered to please fans of *Sherlock* and *Doctor Who*. **DAVID HUGHES**

VERDICT Crackling with energy and fizzing with ideas, this fresh take on *Frankenstein* is a thrilling adaptation that reinvigorates a well-worn tale.

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Grandma

★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. 15 / 79 MINS.**DIRECTOR** Paul Weitz**CAST** Lily Tomlin, Julia Garner, Judy Greer, Marcia Gay Harden, Laverne Cox

PLOT Teenager Sage (Garner) visits her grandmother Elle (Tomlin) in search of money for an abortion. Almost entirely broke herself, Elle leads her on a road trip of old girlfriends, husbands and acquaintances in search of a loan.



RANDMA IS a small movie by almost any reasonable definition: tiny cast, low budget, brief in both time frame and running

time. But it's so fearless in tackling big issues that it dwarfs much larger films and their self-conscious attempts to impart some worthy message. What's more, it does so with endless humour and a lightness of touch you'd expect more from some indie darling than an established veteran like Paul Weitz.

Lily Tomlin, on a hot streak after Netflix's *Grace And Frankie*, is an irascible old poet still grieving for her long-term partner. As we meet her she has just broken up with replacement girlfriend Olivia (Judy Greer) when her granddaughter Sage (the bubble-haired and seriously talented Julia Garner) appears asking for money to pay for her abortion. Elle doesn't question the need,

but lacks the means — and so begins a picaresque tour of old friends and lovers in a search of the necessary dollars.

The film wears its politics lightly — essentially saying some people are gay, some have abortions, get over it — and that's a welcome alternative to the usual handwringing. Its humour comes mainly from the culture clash between Elle's intellectual strain of hippy-tinged liberalism and her granddaughter's youthful outlook. But this is not overly concerned with generational conflict — except in that both are terrified of Elle's high-powered adult daughter, Judy (Marcia Gay Harden). Here, growing old doesn't necessarily mean that one ever feels grown-up.

Still, it does engage with thorny questions about family and relationships, particularly when the mysterious Karl (Sam Elliott) confronts Elle on her callous past. There are no angels nor, contrary to one chapter title, any ogres here; just astonishingly well-realised

60 Minute Makeover had well messed up.

characters, the sort who arrive onscreen fully formed and leave us to continue full and interesting lives after the short period we witness.

As the appointment deadline looms, the pressure builds only a little, towards a gentle, subtle finish. The result is easily Weitz' best film since *About A Boy*, and may be even tighter and smarter than that (though it's a little less funny). But it's Tomlin who really makes it sing, snarling in fury but revealing unexpected vulnerability and kindness too. After a lifetime of success on TV and Broadway as well as on film, Tomlin's best days are apparently only just arriving. **HELEN O'HARA**

VERDICT Acerbic, unexpected and quietly heart-warming without ever approaching sappy, this takes a no-nonsense approach to big issues — life, love and ageing — and never feels heavy-handed. We should all be so lucky in our grandmothers.

ALSO OUT

My Skinny Sister

★★★

OUT **NOVEMBER 27** / CERT. 15 / 93 MINS.**DIRECTOR** Sanna Lenken**CAST** Rebecka Josephson, Amy Deasismont, Annika Hallin

→ Although intelligently played by its young leads and incisive in its discussion of sibling rivalry, this well-intentioned Swedish saga is prone to melodramatics and moralising while viewing a teenage ice skater's anorexia from the viewpoint of her younger sister. **DP**

The Show Of Shows

★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 4** / CERT. TBC / 72 MINS.**DIRECTOR** Benedikt Erlingsson

→ Recalling the golden age — spanning both 19th and 20th centuries — of circus, variety, vaudeville, rodeo and the fairground attraction, this Sigur Rós-scored archive compilation eschews cosy nostalgia to focus on the skills, perils and exploitation involved in the acts and the communality of life on the road. **DP**

The Forbidden Room

★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. 12A / 119 MINS.**DIRECTORS** Guy Maddin, Evan Johnson**CAST** Roy Dupuis, Clara Furey, Louis Negin

→ Exquisitely designed, this cornucopia of melodramatic fragments and movie pastiches will enchant Guy Maddin fans. The more screen history you know, the greater the pleasure, while the numerous cameos (Charlotte Rampling, Udo Kier), offset the whiff of self-indulgence. **DP**

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Scouts Guide To The Zombie Apocalypse

★★★

OUT NOW / CERT. 15 / 93 MINS.

DIRECTOR Christopher Landon **CAST** Sarah Dumont, Tye Sheridan, Logan Miller

→ Three boy scouts earn their brain-bashing badges when an undead virus hits their town. Pitched as a tongue-through-cheek homage to the under-dork teen movie, director Landon's rowdy debut combines raging hormones with rampaging gore — *Superbad* in *Zombieland*, if you will, and it's actually better than it sounds. The movie takes a while to warm up, but once the outbreak surges into merry splatstick, Landon lands some killer gags — in particular, a trampoline skit that boings into bad-taste territory worthy of the Farrellys. The likable cast includes feisty warrior-waitress Dumont and David Koechner as an unstoppable zombie ranger with an unnerving Dolly Parton fetish. **SC**



Radiator

★★★★

OUT NOVEMBER 27 / CERT. 15 / 94 MINS.

DIRECTOR Tom Browne **CAST** Richard Johnson, Gemma Jones, Daniel Cerqueira

→ The balance of bitter and sweet is key in this fragile family drama from first-time director Browne. Middle-aged teacher Daniel (co-writer Cerqueira) has his life in the city interrupted to return to his parents' rural, rotting Cumbrian home when his mother (Jones) tells him she can no longer cope with her bedbound and formidable husband (Johnson) alone. Under the same falling-down roof, the trio can't hide their discomfort; past wrongs and unspoken desires consistently bubble up, occasionally spilling over into moments of both heartbreaking sadness and dark, laugh-out-loud comedy. But the beauty of this particular, personal story is how fiercely it cuts to the bone of a family in parts, simply unable to function as a whole. **KP**



Snoopy And Charlie Brown: The Peanuts Movie

★★★

OUT DECEMBER 21 / CERT. U / 93 MINS.

DIRECTOR Steve Martino **CAST (VOICES)** Noah Schnapp, Hadley Belle Miller, Alexander Garfin

→ Carp about studio exploitation all you like, but director Martino and his animators have paid due diligence to beloved "blockhead" Charlie Brown — an American hero more Woody Allen than Shrek, felled by "a serious case of inadequacy" and the mischief of classmate Lucy and canine Snoopy (*Peanuts*' Tyler Durden). Devotees will appreciate the faithful detail, how the lush 3D animation exactly reproduces Charles Schulz's 2D artwork. As Schulz worked in three-panel strips, so the plot is an assembly of witty skits depicting Brown's personal hell when a new girl arrives to melt his heart and social standing. To add some Pixar-pep, we get Snoopy's loop-the-loop daydreams, dogfighting his nemesis, the Red Baron. It's slight, but sweet. **IN**



The Dressmaker

★★★

OUT NOW / CERT. TBC / 118 MINS.

DIRECTOR Jocelyn Moorhouse **CAST** Kate Winslet, Liam Hemsworth, Hugo Weaving

→ A dusty 1950s Australian town gets quite a shock when beautiful seamstress Tilly Dunnage (Winslet) leaves her work at an exclusive Parisian fashion house to visit her home town, oozing glamour and transforming the dowdy local ladies with miraculous makeovers. Meanwhile, Tilly investigates a mysterious incident from her childhood and is wooed by handsome and kind-hearted local Teddy (Hemsworth). That Teddy is supposed to be the same age as Tilly is just one of the fantastical elements of this muddled adaptation of Rosalie Ham's bestselling novel, in which melodramatic episodes sit oddly with the dark comedy. But it's still a giggle, largely thanks to Tilly's cantankerous mother (Judy Davis) and the camp local cop (Weaving). **ALS**

DID YOU KNOW?

The voices of Snoopy and Woodstock are from archive footage of the late Bill Melendez, who had voiced them since the '60s.

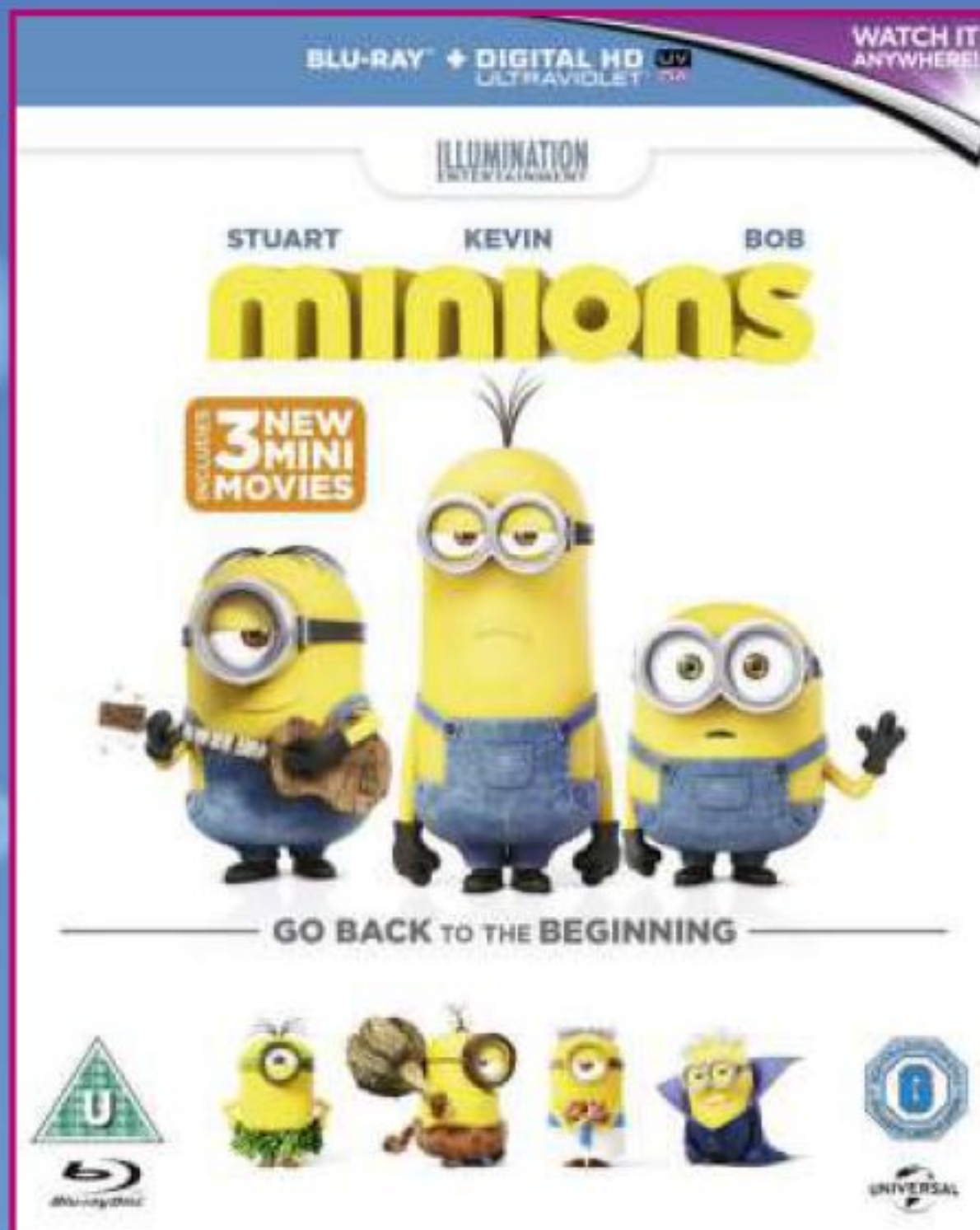


DID YOU KNOW?

Kate Winslet dropped out of Woody Allen's *Match Point* to spend more time with her son. Scarlett Johansson took the role.



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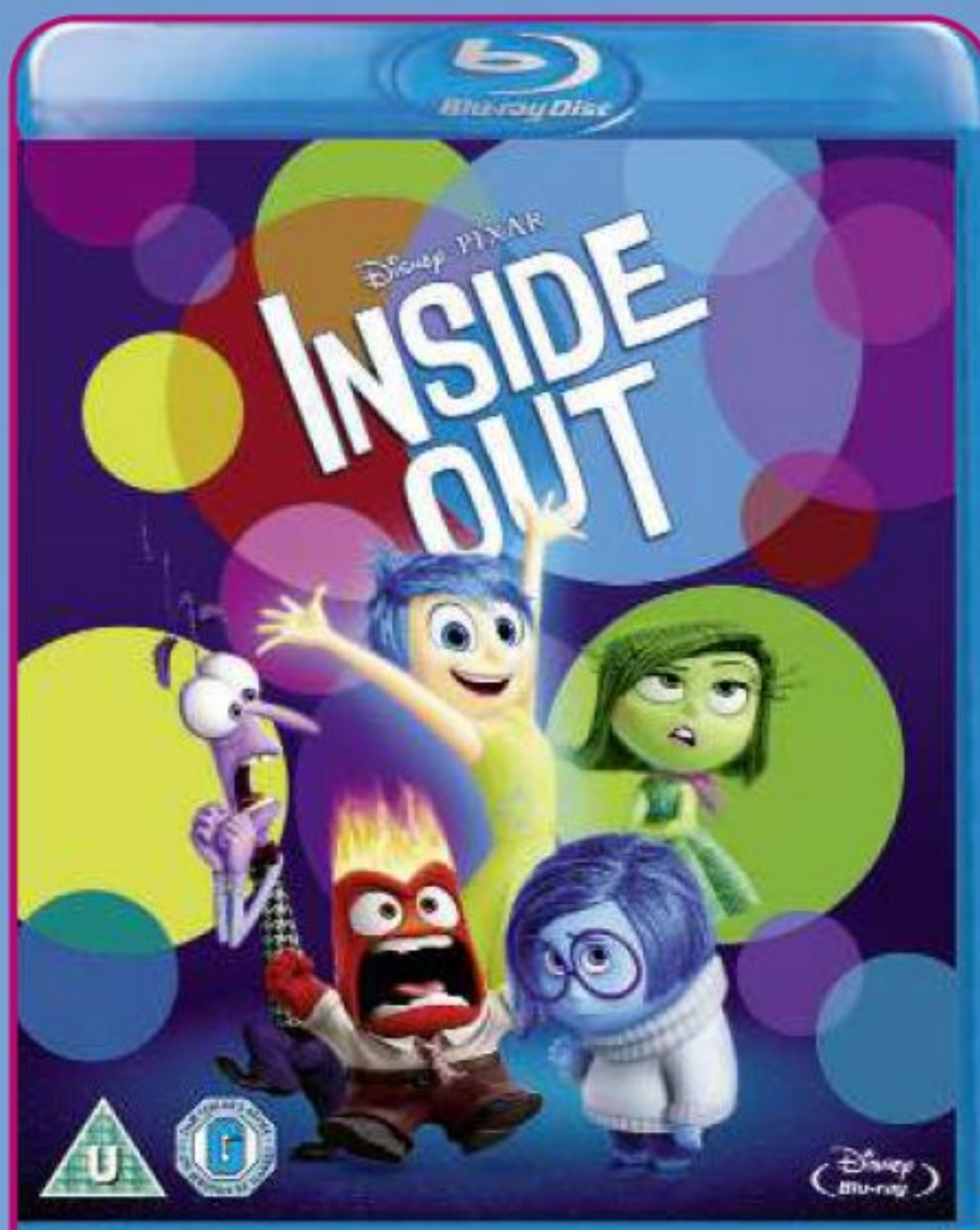
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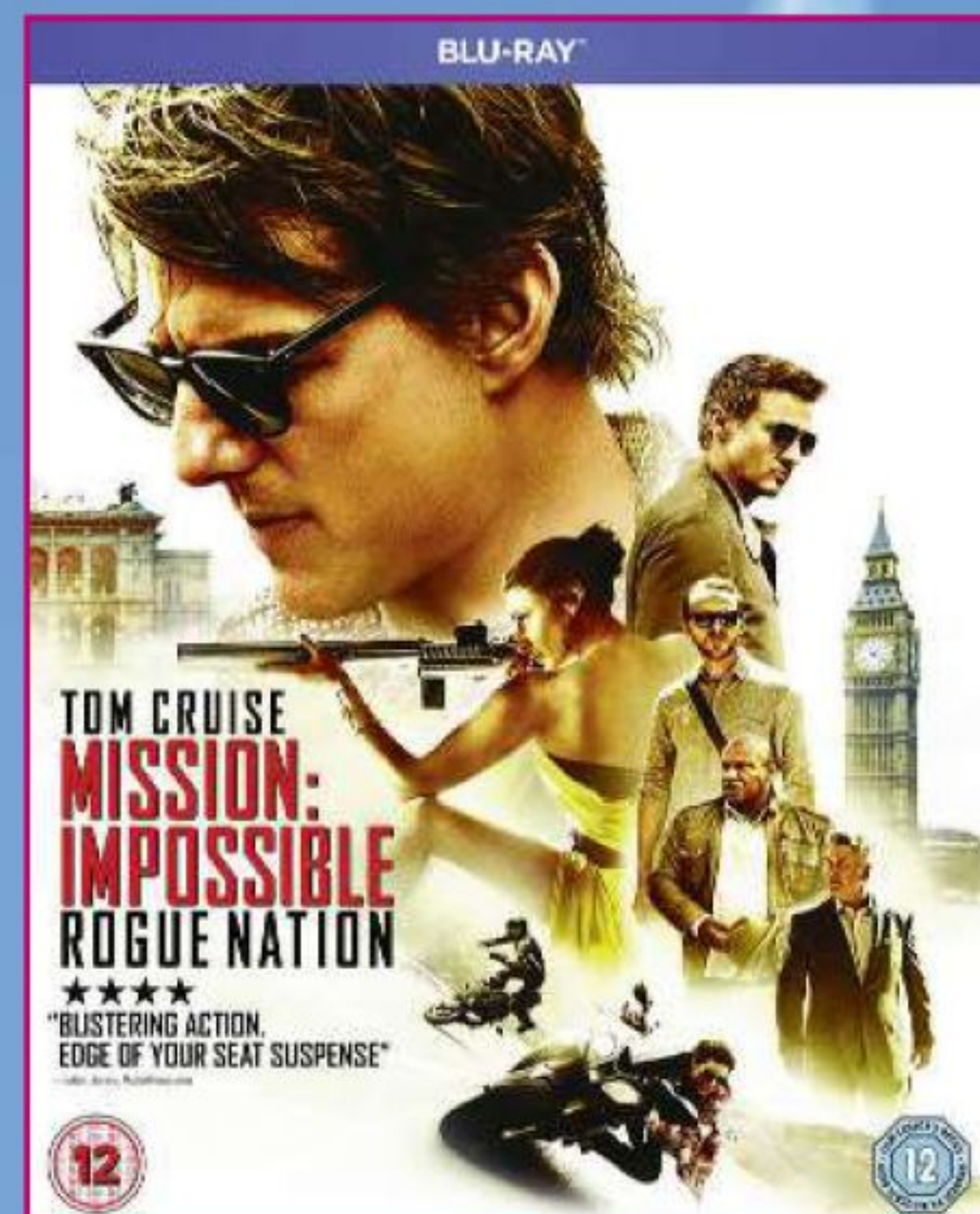
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Sunset Song

★★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 4** / CERT. **TBC** / **135 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Terence Davies **CAST** Agyness Deyn, Peter Mullan, Kevin Guthrie

PLOT Rural Scotland, the start of the 20th century. Chris Guthrie (Deyn) dreams of becoming a teacher but is held back by a brutal father (Mullan) and her love of the land. Yet, her new marriage and whole way of life are threatened by the outbreak of World War I.



UNSET SONG, Lewis Grassie Gibbon's 1932 novel detailing Scottish rural life, has long been a passion project for director Terence

Davies. Swapping his regular milieu of '50s Liverpool for turn-of-the-century Scotland, he takes all the grandiloquent passions and emotional turmoil of his domestic dramas (*The House Of Mirth*, *The Deep Blue Sea*) and transcribes them onto the rugged landscape of The Mearns. The result is overlong but beautiful and heartfelt, anchored by a stunning turn by Agyness Deyn as hardy heroine Chris Guthrie.

Deyn's task is a daunting one. The film tracks Guthrie's journey from an idealistic bookworm to farmer to a loveless marriage with a husband brutalised by the ravages of trench warfare. There are snatched moments of joy — a country wedding pings with

life — but this is mostly a hardscrabble Scotland, full of beatings with a belt buckle (Peter Mullan excels as Chris' violent, God-fearing father), back-breaking work, suicide, rape and misery. The film shifts location only once, to war-torn France. The effect is equally heartbreaking

In many respects, this is *Distant Voices*, *Scottish Lives*. Much of what concerns here is the stuff that has consumed Davies his entire career: physical abuse, the strength of women, an ache for the past, a respect for regional rituals, the power of communal song and the movement of the camera to inscribe meaning and feeling. But for a typically urban, interior filmmaker, *Sunset Song* is a hymn to the enduring power of the great outdoors, out-Mallicking Terrence Malick in its obsession with earth, wind and fire (literally, not '70s funk).

Occasionally it falls into a rote period-picture feel, mostly missing the more poetic approach of Davies' best



Top: Agyness Deyn's Chris models the Fall 1900 range. **Above:** Peter Mullan as Chris' violent father.

work. But it is held together and lifted by Deyn, who not only believably plays from schoolgirl to adulthood but flits between tenderness and toughness taking in every emotional colour along the way — her reaction to a last-reel telegram is the stuff of awards-nomination clip reels. **IAN FREER**

VERDICT Deyn is a revelation in a difficult but rewarding take on Scottish rural life. The most English of directors has done a Scottish classic proud.

Grazing The Sky

★★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. **U** / **88 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Horacio Alcala
CAST Antonio Segura, Max La Sala

→ Showcasing the talents of 15 artistes from 11 countries, this is a visually striking study of circus acrobatics. However, while the skills are breathtakingly elegant and audacious, the insights into the challenges and camaraderie of big-top life are equally fascinating. **PP**

Ice And The Sky

★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. **TBC** / **89 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Luc Jacquet
CAST Claude Lorius, Michel Papineschi

→ Swapping marching penguins for an octogenarian glaciologist, Luc Jacquet pays handsome tribute to Claude Lorius, whose snow chemistry analysis underpinned early climate change theories. The archive footage is compelling, but the soundtrack is a muddle of voice-over, music and effects. **DP**

When Harry Met Sally

★★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. **15** / **92 MINS.**

DIRECTOR Rob Reiner
CAST Billy Crystal, Meg Ryan, Carrie Fisher, Bruno Kirby

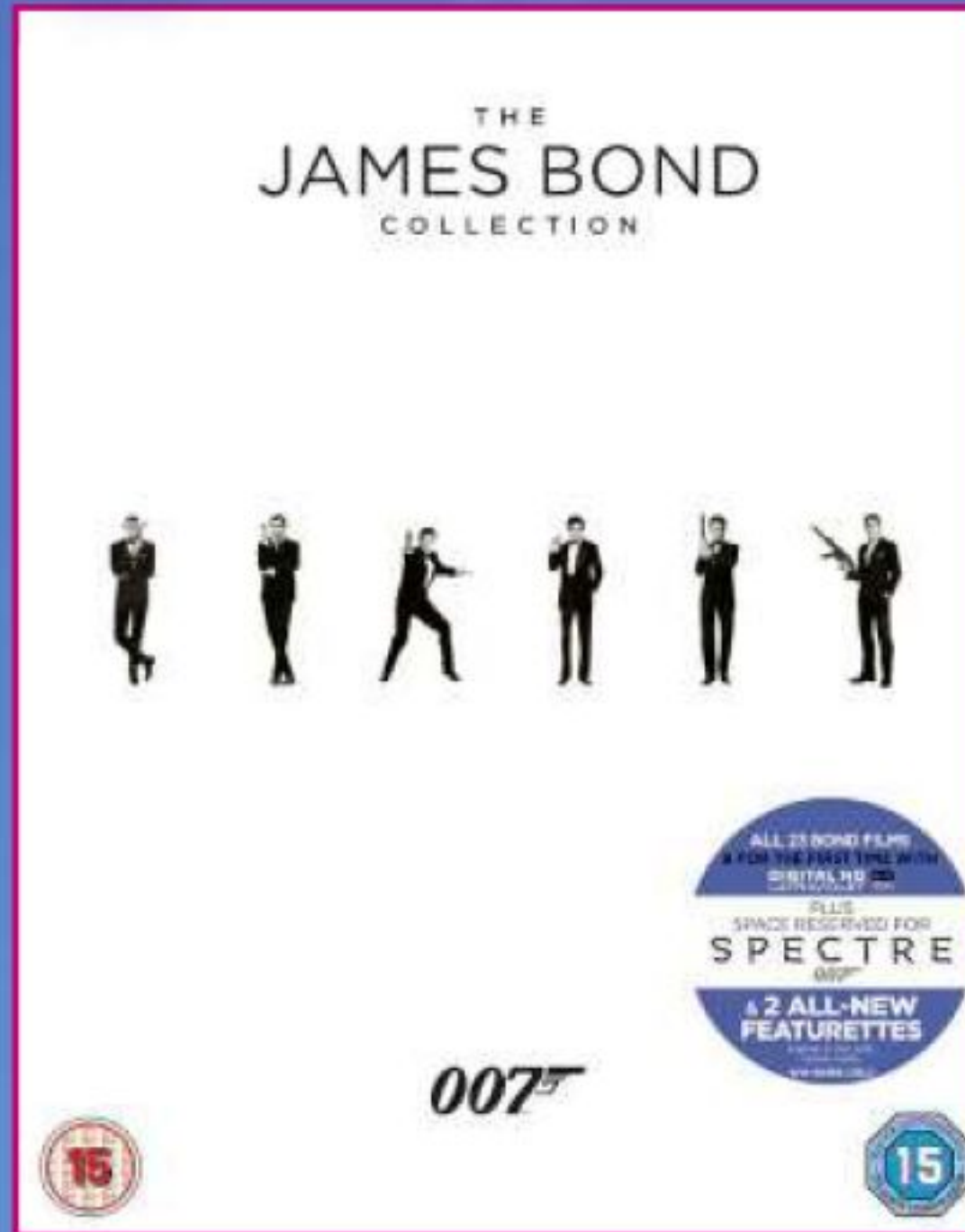
→ A welcome re-release for the evergreen Crystal-Ryan romance, wherein Nora Ephron's tart, grown-up script examines the inevitability of love finding a way despite the fight put up by this famous pair of snappy New Yorkers. **IN**

ALSO
OUT

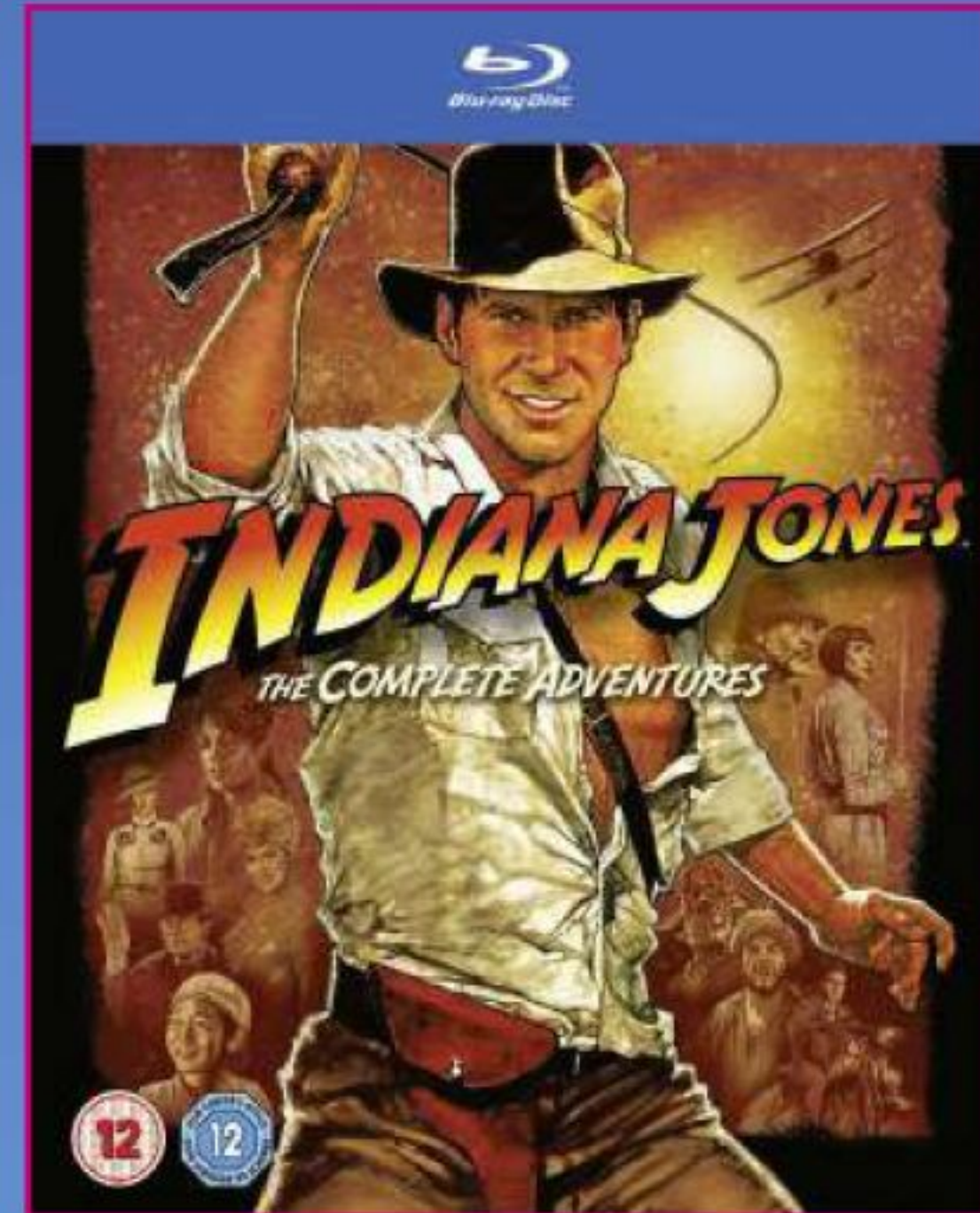
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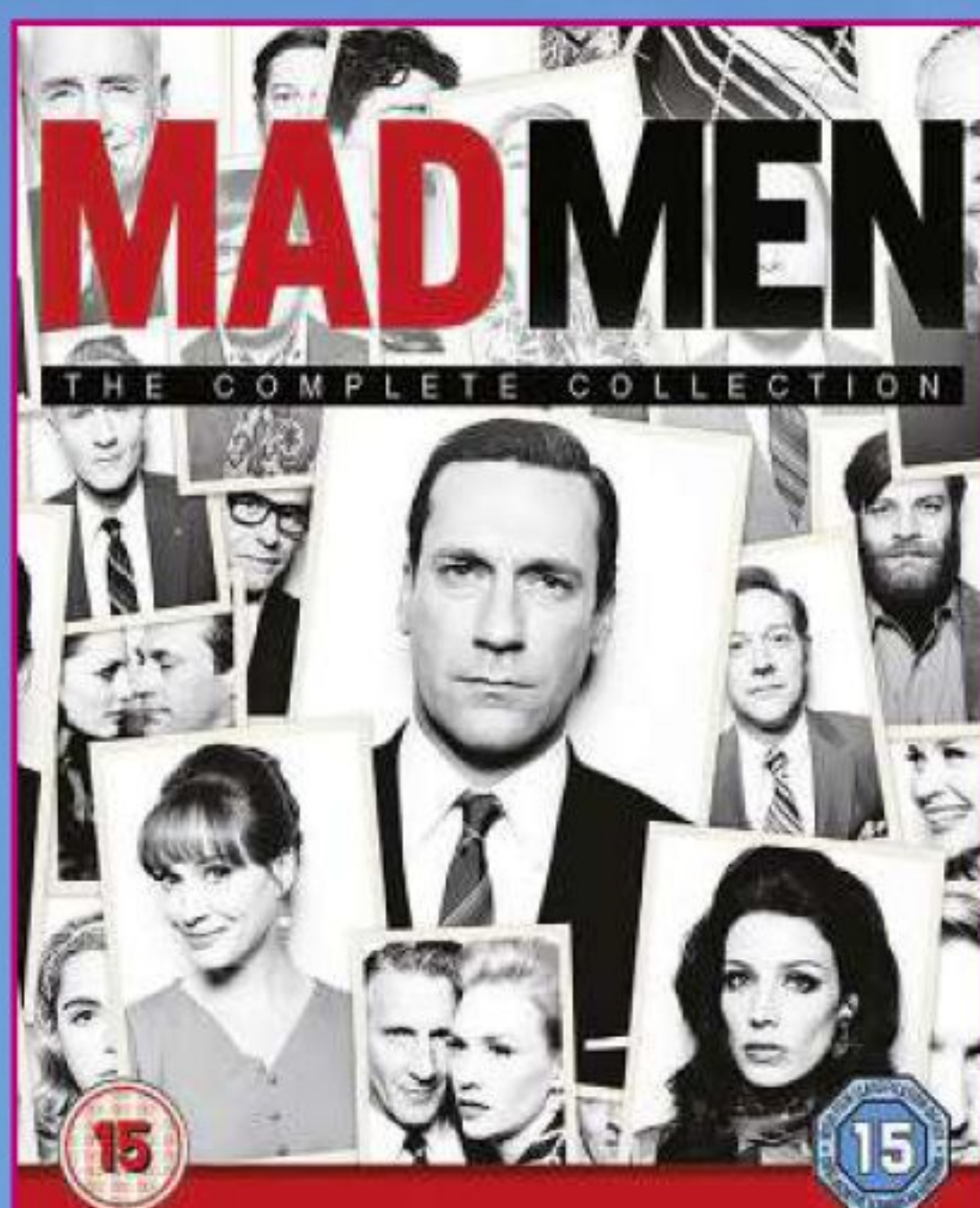
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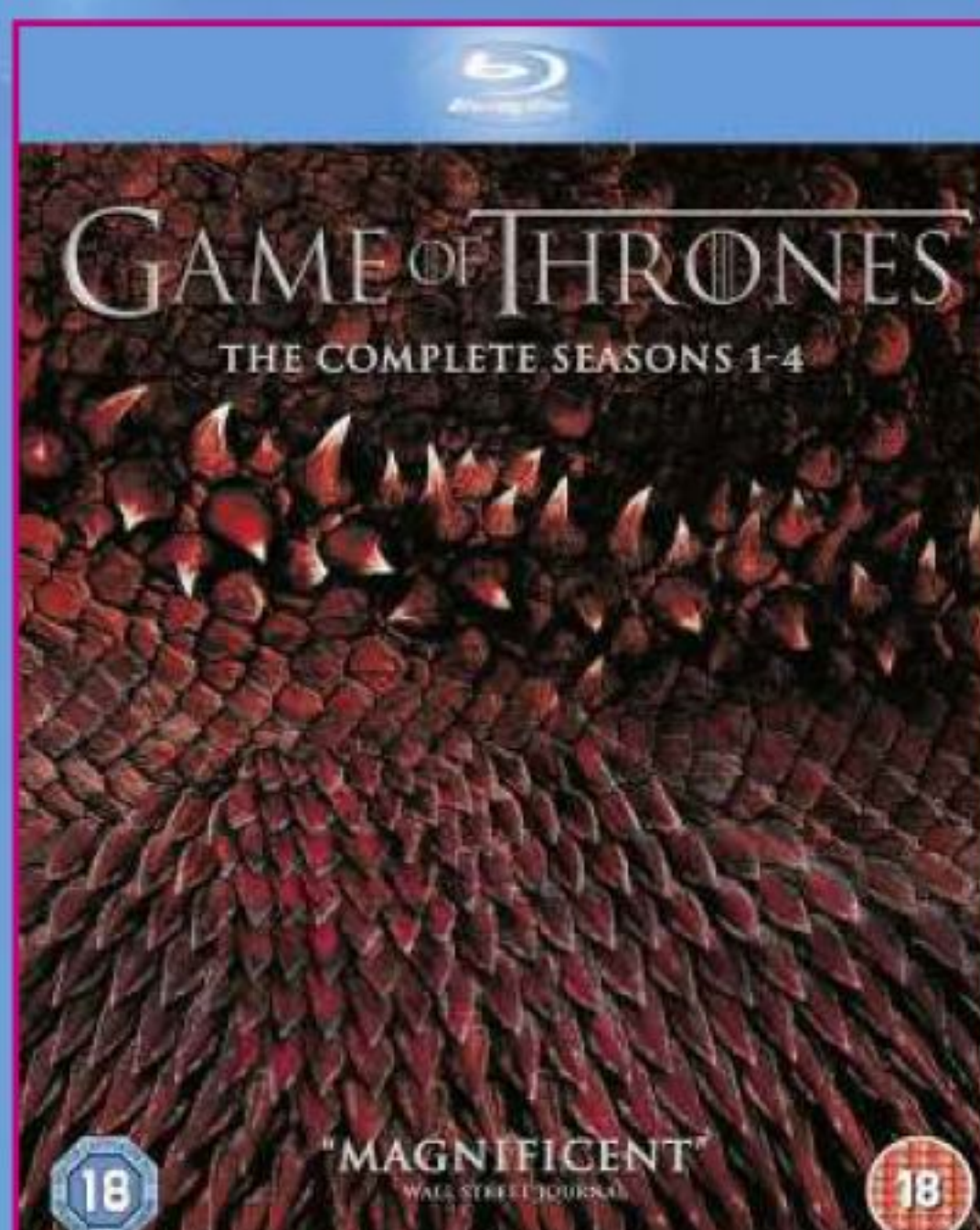
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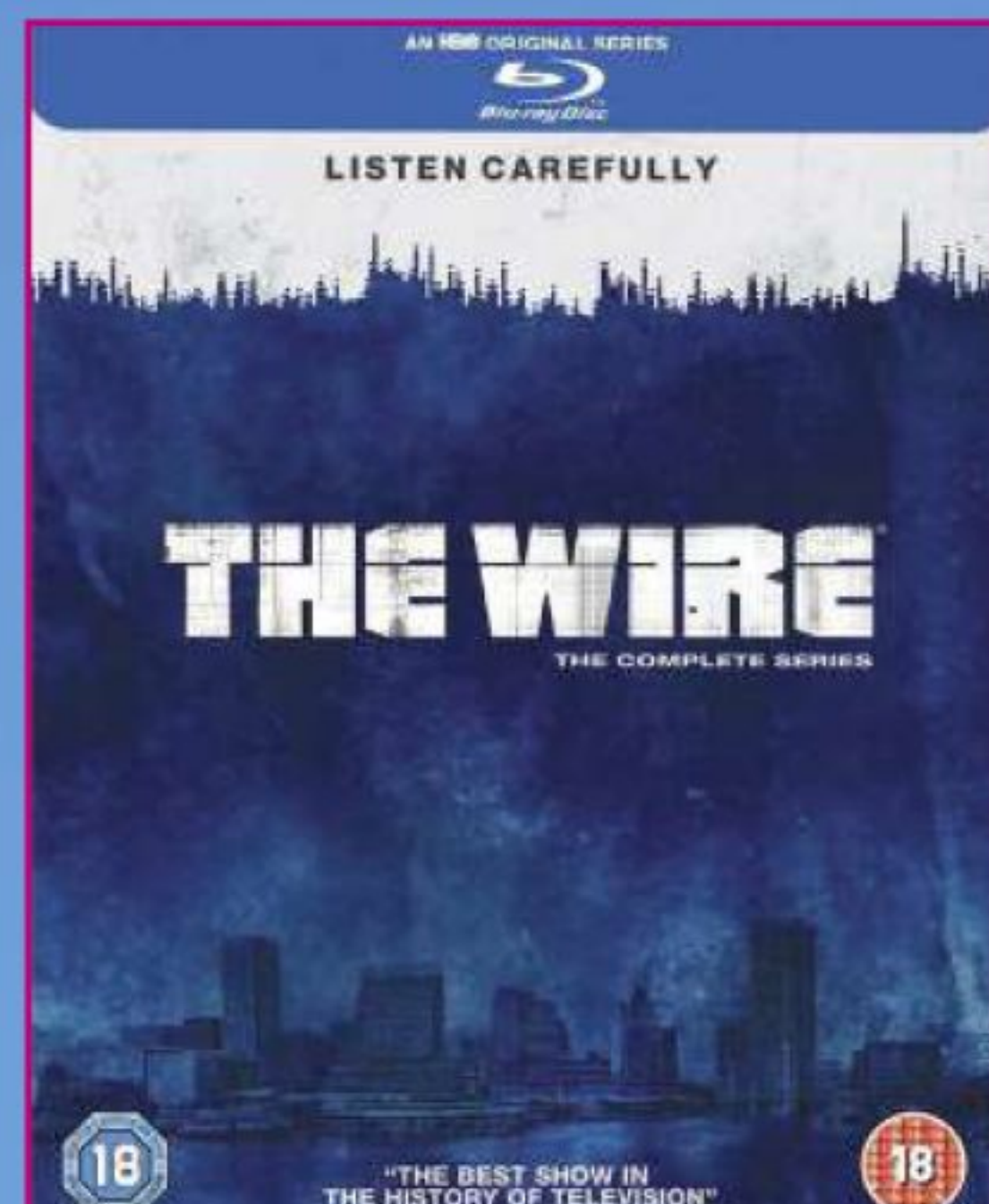
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Chemsex

★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 4** / CERT. 18 / 81 MINS.

DIRECTORS William Fairman, Max Gogarty

→ Gay men 'slam' (inject) crystal meth at orgies in this hard-hitting documentary exploring London's 'chemsex' scene. With frank contributions from users of meth, GHB and more, it's a graphic watch that shows how dating apps and social media have fuelled the scene. Taking a non-judgemental approach, the makers gain access to sex parties and explore the attraction and the dangers in interviews with NHS counsellor David Stuart. It's a fascinating peek into an underground world; Stuart estimates that a newcomer to London's gay scene will be offered drugs within four online chats. **ALS**

DID YOU KNOW?

Jamie Dornan had a cameo in the movie that formed part of the backstory of Sienna Miller's character. The scene was cut to keep the focus on Cooper's Adam.



Burnt

★★

OUT **NOW** / CERT. 15 / 101 MINS.

DIRECTOR John Wells

CAST Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller, Omar Sy, Daniel Brühl, Matthew Rhys

→ Take one cocky, charmless, demon-ridden chef (Cooper), indebted to thugs and detested by the lovers, rivals and colleagues he betrayed. Add improbably lavish backing (from Brühl as the former friend secretly in love with him) for a prime London location to re-launch his career and life. Give characters unintentionally hilarious exposition to explain backstory ("I'm a lesbian! Why did I sleep with you?" wonders Uma Thurman's restaurant critic) or to explain what Michelin stars are. Garnish with a pinch of unpersuasive romance with a colleague (Miller). It's a recipe for glossy, hollow disaster. **AE**



Hector

★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. 15 / 87 MINS.

DIRECTOR Jake Gavin

CAST Peter Mullan, Sarah Solemani, Stephen Tompkinson, Natalie Gavin

→ A road movie of uncertain destinations — its hero, Hector (Mullan), is a nomad of the service station, who decides, on a whim, to reconnect with his estranged sister. How he became homeless remains a mystery, until he hobbles into a West London shelter and past tragedies sharpen into focus. Director Jake Gavin's agenda is simple: to humanise the urban ghosts we pass every day on the streets. Gavin, a landscape photographer, excels in close-up here: the terrain is Mullan's face, every crag and wrinkle suggesting an unspoken story. Mullan's exceptional, the film warm, unfussy and moving. **SC**

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Sparks & Embers

★★

OUT **DECEMBER 18** / CERT. 15 / 85 MINS.

DIRECTOR Gavin Boyter

CAST Kris Marshall, Annelise Hesme

→ Occupying the romcom vs. *Star Wars* slot previously occupied in 1999 by *Notting Hill*, *Sparks & Embers* takes a *Blue Valentine* structure then soaks it in Christmas cheer. The film flits between the start of a relationship — Tom (Marshall) and Eloise (Hesme) meet while stuck in a lift — and the end, as five years later Tom tries to win Eloise back before she heads off to France and marriage. It's full of broad strokes — she is French, refined and tough, he is English, coarse and poetic — and the dialogue and performances do little to add subtlety or different dimensions. Still, its heart is in the right place. **IF**

DID YOU KNOW?

Robert De Niro appears in the documentary as his late parents, both artists, were part of Peggy Guggenheim's circle of artists.



Peggy Guggenheim: Art Addict

★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. TBC / 95 MINS.

DIRECTOR Lisa Immordino Vreeland

CAST Peggy Guggenheim (voice)

→ While researching this captivating documentary, Vreeland unearthed a taped interview from which flowed her long-dead subject's velveteen voice. Magically, Peggy Guggenheim could now tell her own story. "Black sheep" of the American dynasty, Guggenheim was vital to 20th century art and, aided by Vreeland's lively montages and la-de-dah experts, she is astonishingly forthcoming. She was friend to Joyce, lover of Beckett, and married to Max Ernst.

Suffering bouts of nymphomania, she had "so many abortions". By smuggling canvasses out of Nazi Paris, she was "midwife" to Pollock and Rothko. "Art," the doc claims, "was a mirror of her own strangeness." **IN**



Shelter

★★★★

OUT **DECEMBER 11** / CERT. 18 / 103 MINS.

DIRECTOR Paul Bettany

CAST Jennifer Connelly, Anthony Mackie, Bruce Altman

→ Paul Bettany's directorial debut is a bleak, tender love story between a homeless couple, Connelly's heroin-addicted prostitute and Mackie's Nigerian ex-terrorist, shot against the backdrop of a New York that doesn't much know or care that they're there. Bettany, who also wrote the screenplay, conjures fantastic performances from his two leads, with Mackie suppressing his natural swagger in favour of low-key dignity, while Connelly tackles some insalubrious sequences without fear. There are first-time filmmaker flaws — at times, the characters feel like pawns in a pre-ordained plot — but Bettany has a real gift for finding grace in the grimness. It's beautifully composed, while little flights of fancy (the couple dive into a puddle which becomes a swimming pool) lift the spirits. **CH**

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The Danish Girl

★★★★★

OUT JANUARY 1 / CERT. TBC / 120 MINS.

DIRECTOR Tom Hooper

CAST Eddie Redmayne, Alicia Vikander, Ben Whishaw, Matthias Schoenaerts

PLOT Einar Wegener (Redmayne) is a painter happily married to wannabe artist Gerda (Vikander). After her model falls through, Einar poses in silk stockings and satin slippers, setting Einar on a path to her true self: Lili Elbe.



managers (*The Damned United*), the Queen Mum (*The King's Speech*) or dreaming a dream of times gone by (*Les Misérables*). It may start in 1926, but *The Danish Girl* nails a zeitgeist-y hot-button topic of transgender issues led by (but not limited to) Caitlyn Jenner. It's a beautifully mounted, restrained picture but no less moving for it. Einar/Lili's body is biologically male

OM HOOPER HAS made a career out of tackling subjects in which audiences have an active investment before buying a ticket, be it itinerant football

but on the inside she is female. Her true self can be captured in a painting but not in a mirror. The gulf between these two positions is heartbreaking, and it is this space *The Danish Girl* rewardingly explores.

The screenplay, by Lucinda Coxon based on David Ebershoff's novel, takes its time establishing Einar and Gerda Wegener's happy marriage, the disjunct in their careers as artists (Einar is acclaimed, Gerda isn't), with only hints of what is to follow (Einar runs a hand absent-mindedly along a row of women's clothing). Things heat up after Einar, encouraged by Gerda, attends a bohemian party as her newly formed alter ego,



“cousin Lili”. She gets a nosebleed after being chatted up by Ben Whishaw’s charmer, Henrik (“You’re different from most girls”), but the experience is revelatory.

What follows are two intertwined stories. The first is about how Einar transitions to Lili, studying women at the market or at a Paris peep show, becoming a whizz at make-up and getting beaten up, before undergoing an operation that will bring her body in line with who she really is. Redmayne’s fine bone-china features are prime movers in all of this being convincing but so is his performance, reticent, vulnerable and acutely observed. It’s less flashy

than *The Theory Of Everything* but no less satisfying.

Yet the second through-line, how Gerda copes with this, is even more gripping. Initially she is curious and playful, helping her husband dress up and experiment, but at the point where you feel she would explode, she proves astonishingly supportive towards her partner’s plight. Vikander eats this all up with a spoon, by turns energetic, winning, raw and compassionate. Between this, *Ex Machina* and a sparky turn in *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, it seems she can do anything.

Cynics may bash the approach for being too conventional for the

Artists, lovers, friends: Gerda (Alicia Vikander) and Lili (Eddie Redmayne).

adventurous subject matter (compare *Tangerine*), but Hooper’s filmmaking is impeccable, flitting between beautifully bleak Scandinavian landscapes and oddly framed close-ups of Redmayne’s angelic face. The director has an equally firm grasp on tone. Rather than duck the big scenes, such as Einar’s revelry at first holding a dress, Hooper plays them with delicacy and tact. The result is absolutely intoxicating. **IAN FREER**

VERDICT Redmayne’s transformation may grab the headlines but it is Vikander’s touching turn that steals the show. Sedate, certainly, but *The Danish Girl* is touching, timely and exquisite.



The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2

★★★★★

OUT NOW / CERT. 12A / 137 MINS.

DIRECTOR Francis Lawrence

CAST Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Julianne Moore

PLOT The Districts prepare for one final assault on the Capitol. Katniss (Lawrence), meanwhile, has President Snow (Donald Sutherland) in her sights.



HIS FINAL *HUNGER Games* film is so relentlessly solemn that it will occasionally make you long for the merry japes of *Sicario*. But the seriousness of

purpose in this astonishingly tense war movie is understandable. Picking up where *Mockingjay — Part One* finished, the stakes could not be higher, nor our heroine's trauma more profound.

Of course, post-traumatic stress is pretty much the point. While the society of Panem examines how governments use fear to control us, the character stories are all about the damage caused by violence — both given and received. The ever-victorious Katniss (Jennifer Lawrence) is just as broken as the brainwashed

Peeta (Josh Hutcherson) or the twisted President Snow (Donald Sutherland). At times this suggests that, even should she survive, there won't be much left of her.

Still, the emotional weight doesn't detract from a pulse-pounding journey. Director Francis Lawrence dreams up stunning action beats as Katniss and her squad pick their way through the ruined Capitol, avoiding the spectacular booby traps dreamt up by clearly demented Gamemakers. Over and under looming fascist architecture, stripped of all colour except grey, there are chase scenes straight out of horror and action that recalls *Star Wars* or *The Terminator* rather than earlier *Games* films. Katniss aims to assassinate Snow and end the war — but of course, her plan doesn't go to plan.

Jennifer Lawrence is tough as nails here, with steely eyes but cast-iron skin that threatens to shatter under just one more blow. She's not always helped by the script; one tragedy is brushed aside when it should be transformative, and the love triangle falls flat.

Perhaps with so much going on, not every moment could sing. Better are Philip Seymour Hoffman's final scenes ever, doing more with a tiny grin than most actors do with their entire careers, and a supporting cast of surpassing quality. It's not perfect but by the end (or endings — *Return Of The King*-style, there are several), fans will be satisfied that Lawrence and Lawrence have done Katniss proud. **HELEN O'HARA**

VERDICT At times it's too faithful to the book, getting caught up in detail. But its epic sweep, grand designs and central performance deliver a compelling finale.

Auditions for Channel 5's *Gladiators* reboot continued. Next up: LYCRA!

AT A GLANCE



OUT NOW

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2015 Review OF THE YEAR

The stories,
people and
trends that
made 2015
(dino)soar...

Park Life

How Jurassic World became
the year's biggest film

A FEW MONTHS AGO, somewhere around the middle of June, Frank Marshall arrived at the Chateau Marmont hotel in Los Angeles. He was there to meet, among others, Chris Pratt, Bryce Dallas Howard, Colin Trevorrow and Donna Langley, head of Universal Pictures. Glasses were raised and, at one point, some guy called Steven Spielberg phoned in from the East Coast. "We all toasted together," smiles Marshall. "It was very nice."

The get-together marked the phenomenal success of a little movie they'd all worked on — *Jurassic World*, the movie that, with over \$1.6 billion in

the bank, was not just comfortably the year's biggest hit, but the third-biggest of all time. Most notably, its opening weekend of \$208 million beat the record set by Joss Whedon's *Avengers Assemble* in 2012. And it's fair to say nobody saw it coming, not least its producers, Spielberg and Marshall. "The studio was telling us that we were going to be somewhere between \$100 and 110 million on the opening weekend," says Marshall. "But then it seemed that every hour the number would go up. I think it was a perfect storm of a release."

When the opening-weekend record fell, Marvel Studios boss Kevin Feige commissioned a cartoon commemorating the achievement, upholding a long and

EMPIRE
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ALERT!

Cameos Of The Year...

01 HUGH JACKMAN

Me And Earl And The Dying Girl

When director Alfonso Gomez-Rejon needed a Wolverine poster to start speaking to his heroine (Olivia Cooke), he went straight to the man who's wielded the claws since 2000. As it was a fantasy sequence, Jackman decided to use his own Aussie accent.

02 DAVID BECKHAM

The Man From U.N.C.L.E.

Yes, that was Goldenballs, making his debut as a KGB projectionist for his friend, Guy Ritchie. He even has a line. In Russian. And you thought he could only take free kicks and do his hair.

03 JIMMY BUFFETT

Jurassic World

As a man trying to shield his cocktails from a flying dino attack, the US singer has already inspired countless cosplay pics. Not bad for four seconds of screen time.



04 STAN LEE

Avengers: Age Of Ultron

Stan The Man was always going to be on this list. His *Ant-Man* cameo (see page 136) is fine, but his appearance in the *Avengers* sequel, where he drunkenly slurs his catchphrase, "Excelsior!", is our favourite. 'Nuff said, true believers.

05 OLIVIA WILLIAMS

Man Up

Williams drops into the Simon Pegg comedy as Pegg's ex-wife, managing to get bigger laughs with a withering look than a dozen screenplays crammed with dialogue.



noble tradition (started by Spielberg, when *Star Wars* beat *Jaws*' opening-weekend record) where the deposed box-office champ salutes the new incumbent. In it, the Avengers are confronted by a T-rex holding Thor's hammer. "That was fantastic," says Marshall. "I have it in my office. I think I should probably be preparing one to have a dinosaur with a Death Star in its mouth, or something, because I think we are going to be passing the baton soon."

Ah, yes. *The Force Awakens*, produced by Marshall's wife, Kathleen Kennedy, has yet to open, and could well blow past *Jurassic World*. Have the most powerful couple in Hollywood been making wagers around the breakfast

table? "No," he laughs. "We don't think that way. But I had to set the bar high for her. I didn't want to just waltz into the weekend. I don't wanna jinx anything, but they've got a really good shot at it."

Jurassic World outperformed the other anticipated big gun of 2015 — *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* — and the producer believes that, 14 years after the underperforming *Jurassic Park III*, the time was right for a movie like *Jurassic World* to thrive in a marketplace dominated by comic-book movies. "I think it was kind of refreshing," he says. "Because dinosaurs are not superheroes. I think people were ready for that and they were excited by that. And, you know, people think dinosaurs are cool."

Gray (Ty Simpkins) and Zach (Nick Robinson) drive around *Jurassic World* in the gyro-sphere they bought with the film's profits.

Spies vs. Spies

2015's best,
compared and
contrasted



| | Spectre | Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation | Spy | Kingsman: The Secret Service | The Man From U.N.C.L.E. |
|--|---|---|--|--|---|
| WHAT'S THE PLOT? | MI6 is targeted by a nefarious organisation known only as SPECTRE. Only James Bond can stop them. | The IMF is targeted by a nefarious organisation known only as the Syndicate. Only Ethan Hunt can stop them. | Arms dealer Rayna Boyanov is selling a nuke to the highest bidder. Only desk-bound CIA whizz Susan Cooper can stop her. | Mega-rich madman Richmond Valentine plans to kill 90 per cent of life on Earth and start afresh. Only the Kingsmen, plus a scruffy chav, can stop him. | In the 1960s, a wealthy Nazi couple plan to detonate a nuke. Only the CIA's Napoleon Solo and Ilya Kuryakin of the KGB can stop them. |
| IS THE HERO A SUAVE MAN IN A TUX? | A Tom Ford ivory tux, no less, which is treated very badly indeed before being removed to facilitate sexy time. | Not so much a tux guy (except when in disguise at a lavish party), though Hunt certainly scrubs up in a blue suit and burgundy shirt. | No. Instead, Susan is dressed "like Santa Claus' fucking wife". | Colin Firth's Harry Hart certainly is. Taron Egerton's Eggsy, however, is more of a Puffa jacket-and-trainers kinda guy. | Solo is expensively tailored to within an inch of his life, while Kuryakin goes for an earthier Cold War chic. |
| ARE THERE ANY ACRONYMOUS AGENCIES? | Titular (sort of) bad guys SPECTRE, plus MI5 and MI6 are combining to make CNS (Centre for National Security). | The IMF, CIA and MI6 all get a look in. Thankfully, the Syndicate is not an acronym. We'd be here all day. | Just the CIA. WTF? | N.O.P.E. | CIA plus KGB spells U.N.C.L.E. Well, it spells CIAKGB, but that's not quite as catchy. |
| GADGETS? | 007's (well, 009's) Aston Martin comes with flamethrower, rear guns, ejector seat and Sinatra songs as standard. Bond also has an exploding watch. | Oodles. Fingerprint-operated car locks, smart specs, 3D face-mask printers, digital skeleton keys... The IMF is like the ultimate branch of Maplin. | A dart-firing rape whistle, anti-fungal spray to disable security systems, anti-poison laxatives and haemorrhoid wipes. It's a glamorous life. | A Q Branch's worth: bulletproof suits and umbrella guns, electrified rings, augmented reality specs, poison pens, knifey shoes and more. | This is the Cold War, so there are bugs and bug-scanners galore. Kuryakin carries gamma radiation-sensitive film and a CO ₂ laser in his pocket. |
| DOES ANYONE USE A CODE NAME OR COVER? | Bond, being the worst spy in the history of spying, goes by the cunning <i>nom de plume</i> 'James Bond'. | Ethan briefly goes by the designation 'Bravo Echo 1-1'. For fans of THX-based Easter eggs, BE11 is a mirror image of 1138. | Cooper travels under various aliases, including Carol Jenkins, Penny Morgan and the improbably porny Amber Valentine. | Arthur, Lancelot, Galahad, Merlin: the Kingsmen name themselves after the cast of <i>Spamalot</i> . Or the Knights Of The Round Table, one of the two. | Solo travels as an antiques dealer, Kuryakin as an architect. Neither of them do any antiques dealing or architecting. |
| ARE THERE EXOTIC LOCATIONS? | Rome, Austria, Morocco: Bond is basically just following Ethan Hunt around these days. | Belarus, Cuba, Malaysia and France, plus Austria and Morocco, the go-to destinations for spies in 2015. | Cooper takes a tour of Europe's glamorous capitals, hitting up Paris, Rome and Budapest. | So London-centric it's like it was filmed on one of those big red tour buses. | Limited to Italy, with Rome playing a big part alongside some gorgeous Amalfi Coast locales. |
| DOES THE BAD GUY LIVE? | Yes. In a rarity for Bond, Blofeld isn't killed, but is arrested instead. As he doesn't actually commit <i>that</i> many crimes, he should be out soon. | Yes. Whispering Sean Harris' evil Solomon Lane is locked away in a glass box at the end. They might let him out for pee breaks. | Yes. Rose Byrne's Rayna is last seen being hauled away by cops, telling them not to "touch my fucking hair". | No. Valentine is skewered on his own sidekick's leg, and then projectile vomits at the sight of his own blood. It's how he would have wanted to go. | No. All the villains are thoroughly U.N.C.L.E.D. |
| WHO'S THE HENCHMAN? | None meatier than Dave Bautista's Mr. Hinx, the man with the silvery thumbnails. | Janik 'Bone Doctor' Vinter is a nasty piece of work, but then, with a nickname like Bone Doctor he was never going to do kids' parties. | Rayna employs plenty of anonymous and disposable goons, but no standout henchman. | Henchwoman, actually: Valentine's pal Gazelle has razor-sharp blades for legs, and isn't afraid to cut you in half with them. | Just a pet torturer, Uncle Rudi. |



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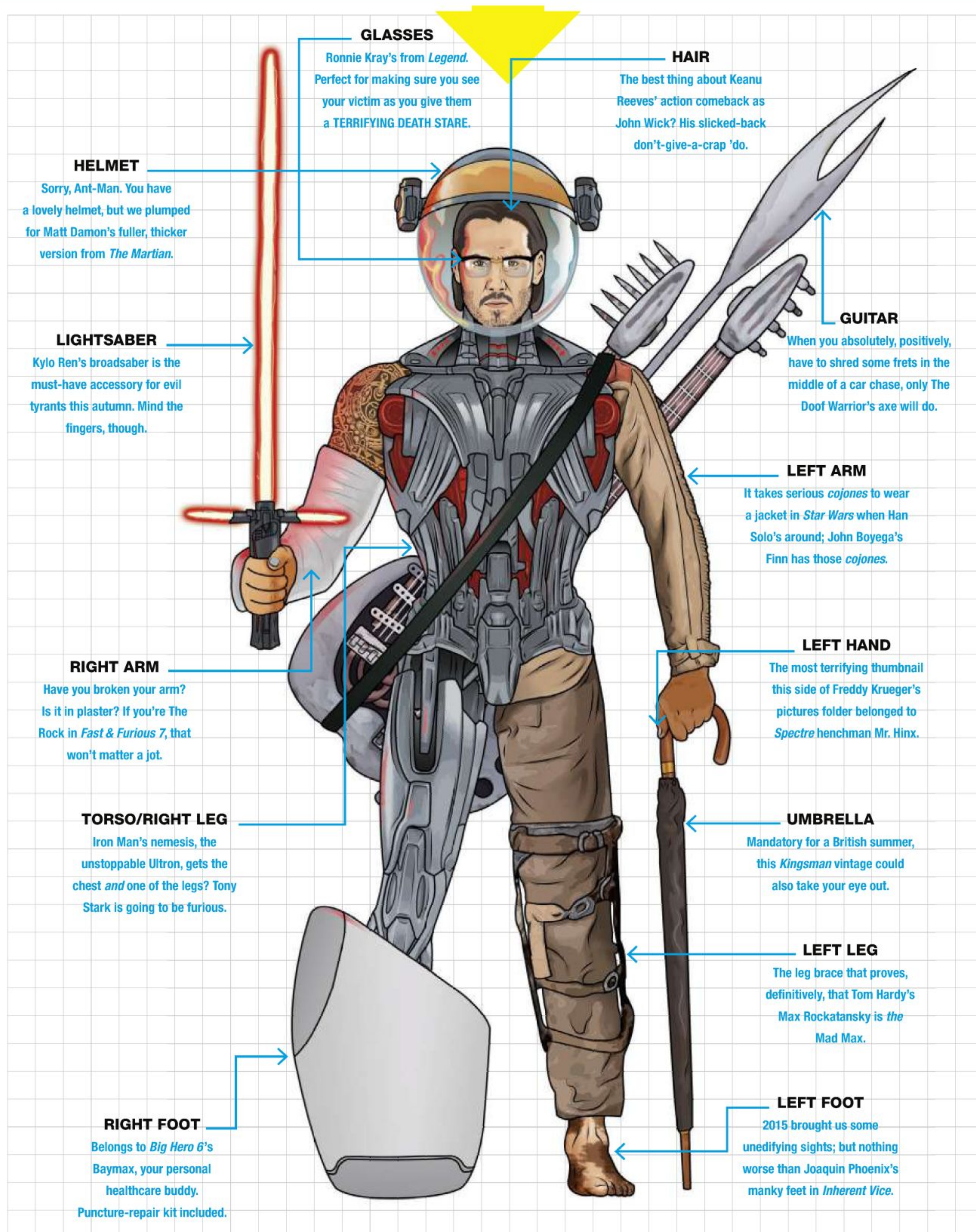
Trend Of The Year CUTTLEFISH

Yes, cuttlefish. They were constantly mentioned in movies this year, so much so you could have been forgiven for thinking that seafood chef Rick Stein had been moonlighting as a screenwriter. In *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*, Andy Serkis' Ulysses Klaw mentions how they use 'disco lights' to distract their prey. "It's not really disco lights," says Nicholas Gladman, of the University Of Leeds' School Of Biology. "But they can do that." In *Me And Earl And The Dying Girl*, Nick Offerman mentions fried cuttlefish, while in *Jurassic World*, their DNA is used to explain away the Indominus Rex's camouflage ability. "They can alter their colouration using their visual system," explains Gladman. "But cuttlefish are molluscs, so they're very far away from vertebrates like dinosaurs. I'm not sure it'd work for real..."

Man Of The Year

Made of component parts from 2015's greatest male characters

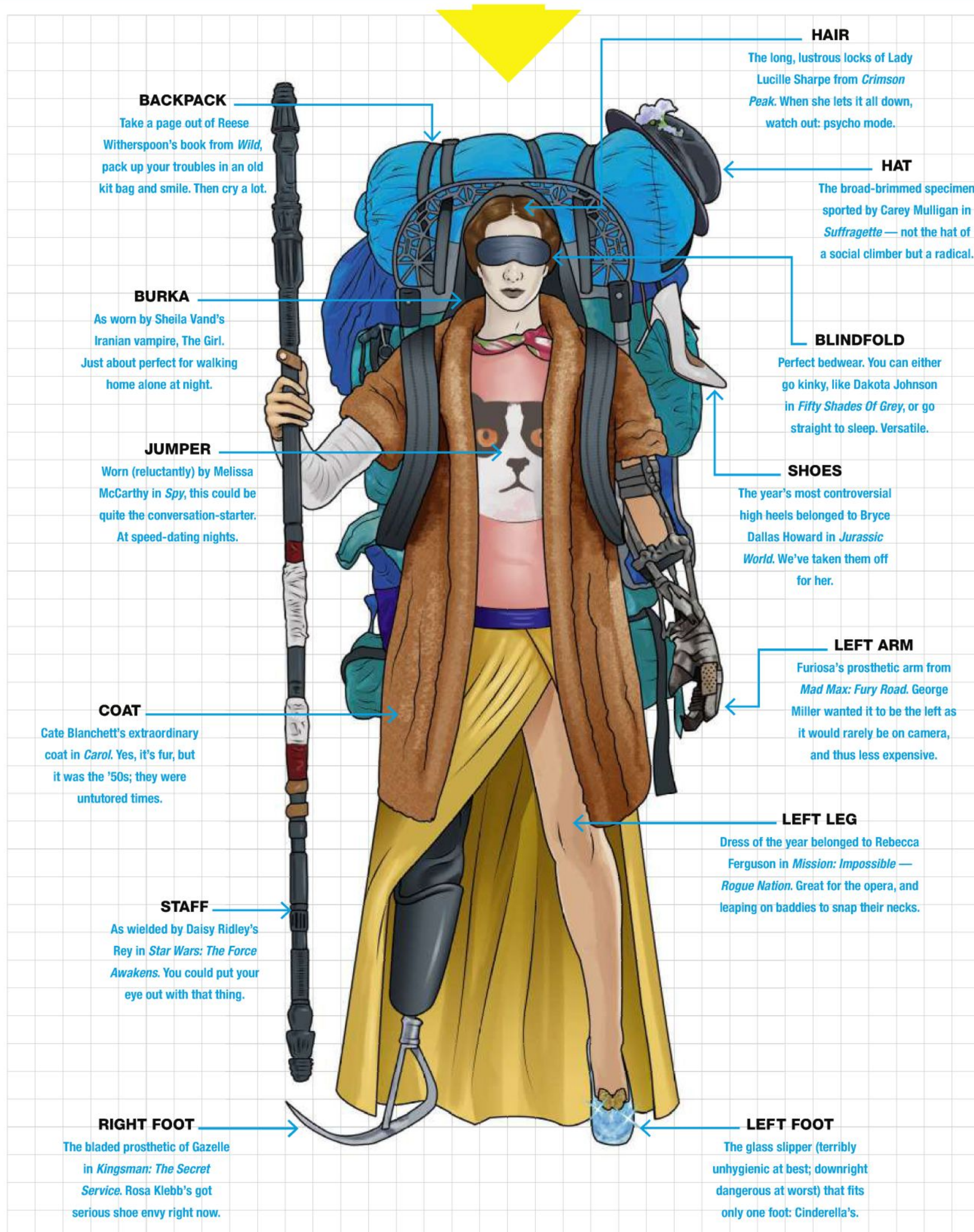
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Woman Of The Year

Pieced together from our favourite screen ladies

ILLUSTRATION BILL McCONKEY



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ALERT!

The 2015 Cry-o- meter



ANT-MAN

Ant-Man's friendly flying companion is gunned down in the line of duty. We're not going to cry. It's an ant, for God's sake.



JOHN WICK

Russian gangsters shoot John Wick's achingly cute Beagle puppy, Daisy, in the head. We'll be honest, it's a lip-wobbler.



BROOKLYN

Homesick Saoirse Ronan gets on the phone to her distraught mother, back in Ireland, after a family member dies. No, *you've* got something in your eye.



FAST & FURIOUS 7

Dominic Toretto says goodbye to Brian O'Conner, and we say goodbye to Paul Walker. A heartbreaking tribute.



INSIDE OUT

Bing Bong, the imaginary friend, learns to let go of Riley, and disappears into a spectral realm from which there is no escape. Absolute floods.

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eOne



Sean Bean *Lives!*

Sean Bean survived every film he was in this year, bucking one of the grandest traditions in movies. So we asked, what if...?

Jupiter Ascending

As the stoic half-man, half-bee Stinger Apini, Bean's catchphrase is, "Bees don't lie." Or die, as it turns out.

THE ALTERNATIVE: In a shock move, all the bees in the world fly up Stinger's backside, and sting him into the middle of next week. This is what's known as a Jupiter ass ending. Sorry, Sean.

Pixels

As SAS officer Corporal Hill, Bean shows up for a strange but brief cameo, doesn't die, and then buggers off. Having not died.

THE ALTERNATIVE: He's bitten by Pac-Man, turned into a computer programme, uploaded to Netflix and spends eternity trapped in a series of Adam Sandler movies. Bad luck, Beany.

The Martian

As NASA bigwig Mitch Henderson, Bean is stoic in the face of overwhelming odds, solves a galactic crisis, and at no point gets squashed by Matt Damon's spaceship as it returns to Earth. Huh.

THE ALTERNATIVE: He gets crushed by Matt Damon's spaceship as it returns to Earth. Ouch.

Deaths Of The Year

They died, so we could point and laugh at their misfortune



01 ZARA *JURASSIC WORLD*

Katie McGrath has corpsed more times than she can count. "I've pretty much died in everything I'm in," she laughs. "In *Dracula* I got bitten in a bath by Jonathan Rhys Meyers, who then spat blood into my face. And I died every year in *Merlin*. It must be my face!" But while McGrath is used to flatlining for the camera, nothing could prepare her for her showstopping demise in *Jurassic World*. As self-involved personal assistant Zara, she's picked up by a flying pterosaur and dropped in a lagoon — and just when you think it's safe to go back into the water, along comes aquatic heffalump the mosasaurus. Game over.

"The director Colin (*Trevorrow*) offered me the job by saying, 'Listen, this is going to be a big deal. This death is epic,'" recalls the Irish actress, who becomes the first woman to bite the dino-dust in a *Jurassic Park* movie. "I was like, 'Whatever.' Cut to the shoot and I'm in an abandoned car park in New Orleans, hanging upside down off a crane, about to be dropped 11 storeys. The only thing I really freaked out about was when they asked me to open my eyes underwater. They said, 'Are you kidding? That's what you're having a moment about?'"

There's an argument that Zara perhaps didn't deserve such a savage and protracted death for the heinous crime of not being a particularly observant personal assistant. For her part, McGrath is delighted to have been bumped off in such a memorable manner. "The best part is how many people called me or texted me, who I hadn't heard from in years, saying, 'I just saw you being gobbled by a dinosaur!' I had a much bigger impact in the movie than I expected, given I'm only in it for a few minutes. And my mum is ecstatic that you guys have given me Death Of The Year. She just loves that I've won *something*."



02 QUICKSILVER

AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON

"You didn't see that coming," pants Aaron Taylor-Johnson's super-speedy superhero after he's riddled with bullets. And he's right — we didn't, mainly because Joss Whedon had been heavily telegraphing the death of Hawkeye instead. Characters who die in Marvel movies have a habit of coming back. How long can Quicksilver stay snuffed?



03 MORRIS

BIG GAME

The hilarious high point of Jalmari Helander's middling Amblin-lite caper comes when Ray Stevenson's baddy is hit in the chest by an arrow. Luckily for him, it doesn't have the momentum to break the skin, bouncing off instead. Unluckily for him, it stops his pacemaker and triggers a mid-air heart attack. It's a shame about Ray.



04 KIM JONG-UN *THE INTERVIEW*

When we thought Seth Rogen comedy *The Interview* might trigger World War III, this was the shot causing all the trouble: when real-life North Korean dictator Kim Jong-un is blown up by a rocket. Hacked Sony emails reveal much talk of FX covering up Jong-un's exploding head with flame. The end result, soundtracked by a cover of Katy Perry's *Firework*, is rather lovely. We bet Jong-un's a big fan.



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The 50 films to see in 2015 and why...



Amy

Senna director Asif Kapadia works similar magic on this look at the tragic life of the late, great Amy Winehouse.



Ant-Man

Marvel's smallest film yet survived the loss of Edgar Wright to deliver a fun, fresh spin on the heist movie.



Avengers: Age Of Ultron

Joss Whedon's sequel didn't match the original but was a dark, weird beast that rewarded repeat viewings.



Big Hero 6

Disney's latest non-Pixar cartoon had smarts and giggles galore and, in hero Baymax, an instant icon.



Birdman

Alejandro G. Iñárritu's Oscar-winner was a stunningly cinematic study into the power of ego.



Bridge Of Spies

Hanks and Spielberg reunite for this surefooted Cold War drama. The anti-Bond, if you will.



Carol

Passion blazes as Rooney Mara and Cate Blanchett fall for each other in '50s New York.



Crimson Peak

Guillermo del Toro's Gothic romance — not a horror — is a sumptuous, unsettling, deeply creepy thing.



The Duke Of Burgundy

Peter Strickland's beautifully odd love story is the best BDSM movie of the year. Spanks all competition.



Ex Machina

Alex Garland strands inventors and android in a house. The result is icily intelligent and sexy sci-fi.



Fantastic Four

Josh Trank's laborious flick failed to live up to its title. Even its own director dissed it in a swiftly deleted tweet.



Fast & Furious 7

Vin Diesel, The Rock and the late Paul Walker reunite for the biggest bout of nitrous oxide-powered hogwash yet.



Fifty Shades Of Grey

Come for the Jamie Dornan/Dakota Johnson sex scenes, stay for the horrendous dialogue.



45 Years

Andrew Haigh's heart-wrenching drama about a long-term marriage riven by revelations from the past.



A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night

If you see only one Iranian-American vampire spaghetti Western all year, see this one.



Girlhood

Not a Richard Linklater sequel, but a beautifully frank French coming-of-age tale.



The Good Dinosaur

After the wonderful *Inside Out*, the second Pixar movie of the year. Potentially the great dinosaur.



The Hunger Games: Mockingjay — Part 2

Katniss Everdeen takes her final bow. And you can pronounce that either way.



Inherent Vice

Paul Thomas Anderson adapts Pynchon, and it's as mindbending as you'd expect. And much funnier.



Inside Out

Pixar takes you inside the human mind, rips out your heart and does unspeakable things to your tear ducts.



The Interview

Seth Rogen and James Franco go to North Korea and nearly kill us all. Hard to see what the fuss was about.



It Follows

David Robert Mitchell's dark, brooding horror does for rumpy-pumpy what *Jaws* did for water.



John Wick

Thumping thriller in which bad guys kill Keanu Reeves' puppy, and immediately regret that decision.



Jupiter Ascending

The Wachowskis shoot for the moon, and miss by miles, in this demented sci-fi fantasy.



Jurassic World

The biggest film of the year (at the time of going to press). We think dinosaurs are in it.

From blockbuster behemoths to indie marvels, with a few stinkers in-between, if you got through 2015 without seeing any of these, you're doing it wrong



Kingsman: The Secret Service ○

Matthew Vaughn makes the Bond movie every 12 year-old boy would love to see.



Legend ○

Tom Hardy and Tom Hardy are The Krays in Brian Helgeland's uneven but very entertaining crime tale.



The Look Of Silence ○

Joshua Oppenheimer's masterful follow-up to Indonesian genocide exposé The Act Of Killing.



Macbeth ○

Shakespeare's Scottish Play becomes the Scottish Film, flecked in blood and dirt and grime.



Mad Max: Fury Road ○

George Miller returns to the desert, and shows directors half his age how to make an action movie.



The Martian ○

Matt Damon gets stranded on Mars and sciences the shit out of it in Ridley Scott's crowd-pleaser.



Me And Earl And The Dying Girl ○

A wannabe filmmaker befriends a sick girl in this gorgeous and affecting story.



Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation ○

Christopher McQuarrie's twisty-turner was perhaps the best *Mission* yet.



Mommy ○

Xavier Dolan delivers again with this layered, funny, surprising look at a single mother's life.



A Most Violent Year ○

J.C. Chandor's drama shies away from bloodshed but does have the best foot-chase since *Point Break*.



A Pigeon Sat On A Branch Reflecting On Existence ○

Roy Andersson's first film in seven years was boundlessly inventive, not least its title.



Selma ○

Ava DuVernay's moving look at the Selma riots/marches. David Oyelowo excels as Martin Luther King.



Sicario ○

The year's most gripping thriller, as Emily Blunt sinks into the murk of the unending war on drugs.



Song Of The Sea ○

Extraordinary animation from director Tomm Moore, rapidly becoming a one-man Irish Studio Ghibli.



Spectre ○

Bond is back, doing his Bondy things in his Bondy way. Could wind up as 007's biggest outing ever.



Spy ○

Yes, another spy movie, and comfortably the funniest, as Melissa McCarthy finds her inner Jimmy Bond.



Star Wars: The Force Awakens ○

We're not sure what this one's about. It might be the new Ken Loach.



Steve Jobs ○

The second biopic of the Apple genius is a considerable upgrade on the Ashton Kutcher version.



Still Alice ○

The film that finally bagged Julianne Moore her overdue Oscar, as a woman suffering from early onset Alzheimer's.



Straight Outta Compton ○

Everything you wanted to know about N.W.A but were afraid to ask (except why there isn't a dot after 'A').



Suffragette ○

Sarah Gavron assembles an all-star cast for this unflinching look at the fight to get women the vote.



Terminator Genisys ○

Schwarzenegger returns as the T-800 in a confused farrago that may be the year's worst blockbuster.



The Theory Of Everything ○

Eddie Redmayne is Stephen Hawking in James Marsh's fragile drama. Oscar ahoy!



Trainwreck ○

Judd Apatow and Amy Schumer deconstruct the romcom. Its heart is as sweet as its mouth is filthy.



Whiplash ○

Miles Teller gets the blues. J. K. Simmons gets the Oscar. Full of cymbalism.

best of 2015



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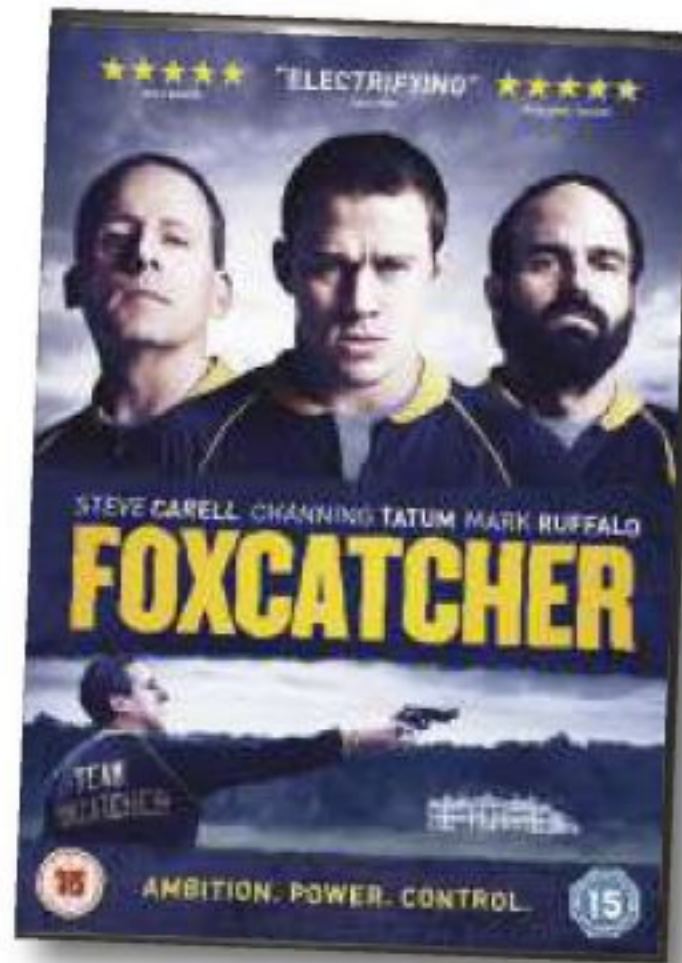
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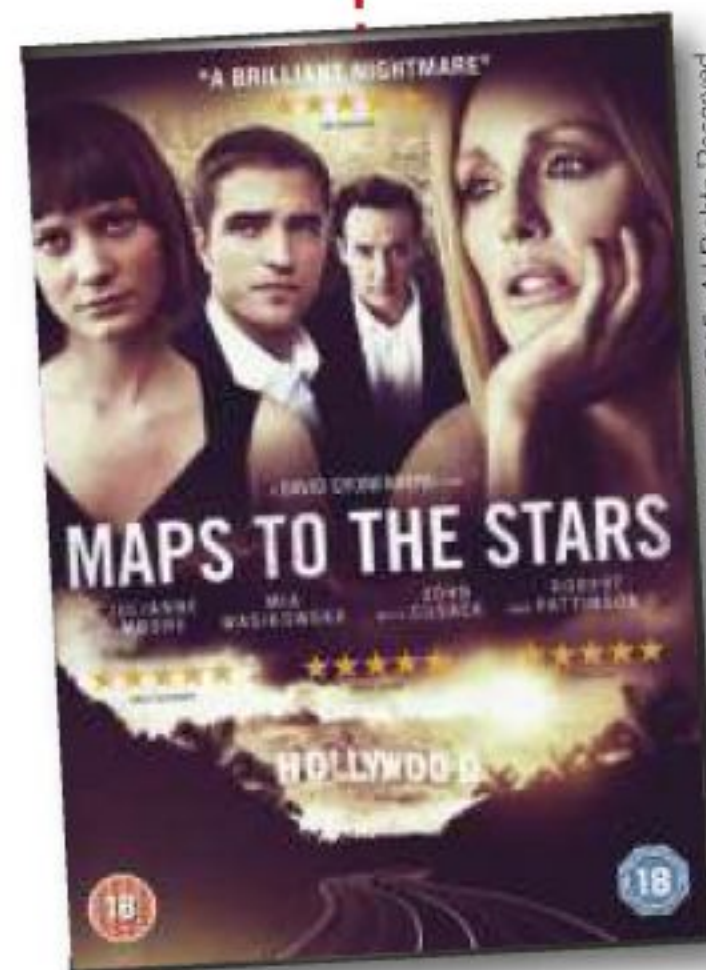
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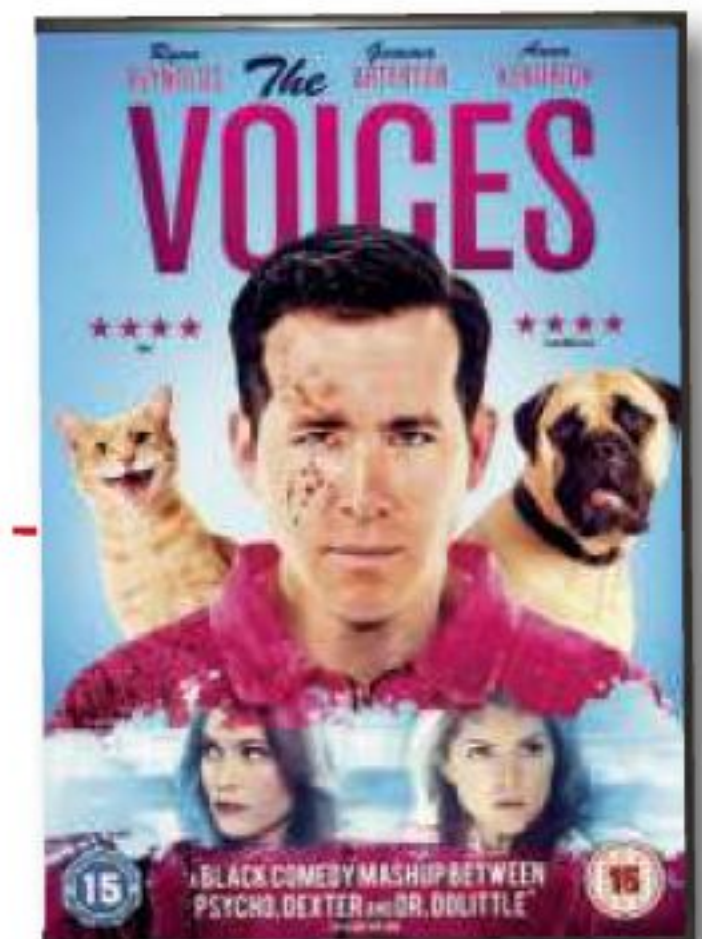
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Walt Disney



THE NEW ORDER

As they put the final touches to the most anticipated movie of the decade, J.J. Abrams and crew reveal how they brought *Star Wars* home

WORDS IAN FREER



"WE HAD ONE FOR A LONG, LONG time," says J. J. Abrams about one of the most critical aspects of any *Star Wars* film: the opening crawl. "We're still playing with it now and I'm sure we will for another couple of weeks. I know we are going to be in amazing shape when that title appears. The question is not to lose that shape the second the crawl begins. Like every aspect of this movie, it's an important challenge."

Abrams has faced a Kessel Run of "important challenges" but they are coming to an end. *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* has reached a landmark. It is 48 days (1,152 hours, 69,120 minutes) before it rolls out across in practically every cinema in the world, and today is the day the picture gets "locked". With just a few visual effects shots to slot in, Abrams and editors Mary Jo Markey and Maryann Brandon are making no further changes. Today involves tweaking pre-dubs (sadly, not Reel 2 Dialogue 2) with *Star Wars* sound design legend Ben Burtt before a final mix, and then that's it. This is the film that the world has been eagerly waiting for since its announcement on October 30, 2012. Three years ago to the day.

Sitting in the sunshine outside the Howard Hawks dubbing stage on the 20th Century Fox lot — a reminder his film won't open with that famous fanfare — Abrams, dressed in the dark T-shirt, darker jeans and ever-present shades combo of an alt-rock bass player, is in a serious but bright mood. Ever since being wooed by Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy to carry on George Lucas' legacy, he has spent day and night figuring out what makes *Star Wars*

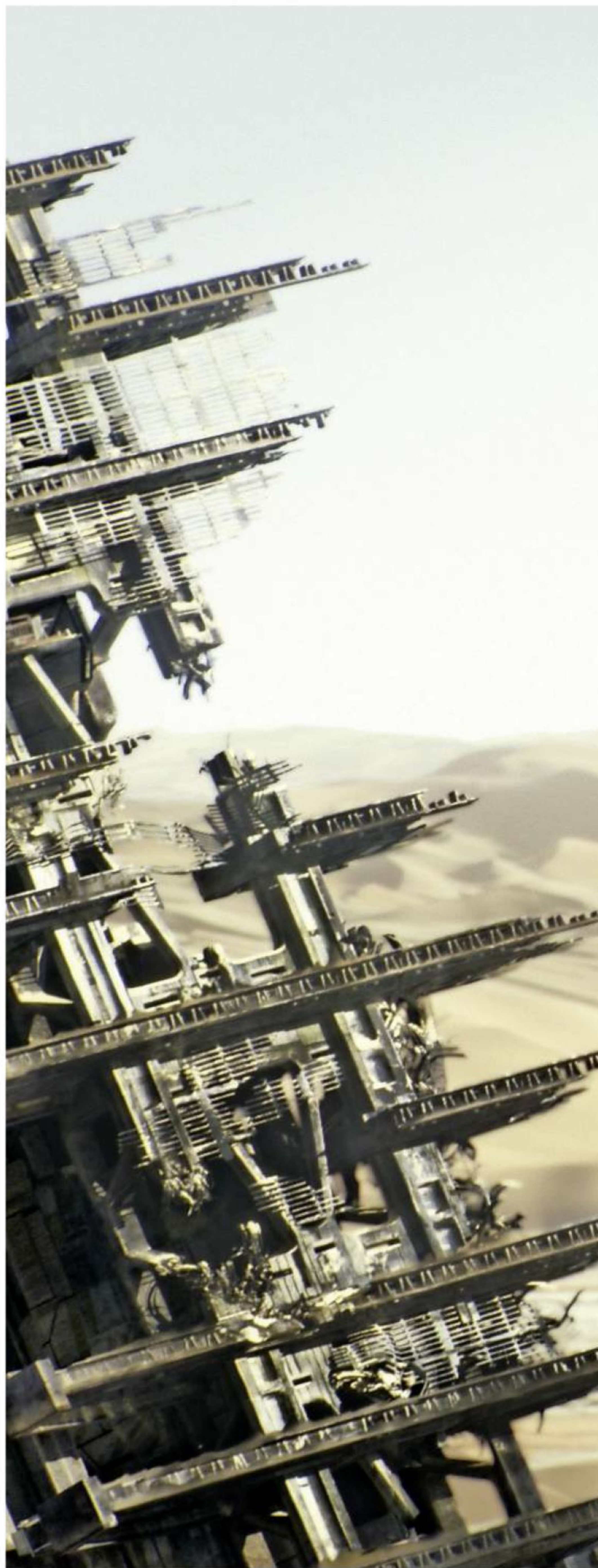
indisputably *Star Wars* in 2015. And he seems relieved to be revealing the answer.

"It's impossible to have any real distance from it or objectivity," he says. "We are in a pretty healthy place. I am looking at things on a particularly technical, granular level. At this stage, I admire the purity of a kid who draws something and says, 'I'm done,' then just walks away. I am excited for the next stage."

BEFORE HE STARTED *The Force Awakens*, Abrams watched some movies. No, not those ones. Other ones. He looked at "the confidence" of John Ford Westerns. He took in the "unbelievable scene choreography and composition" of Kurosawa's *High And Low*. And he studied "the powerful stillness" of Terrence Malick. "It's not something I would normally have thought of coming to *Star Wars*," he says. The spare visual style of Ford, Kurosawa and Malick points to a key mandate for Abrams' approach to *Episode VII*: the distinctive less-is-more quality of the originals.

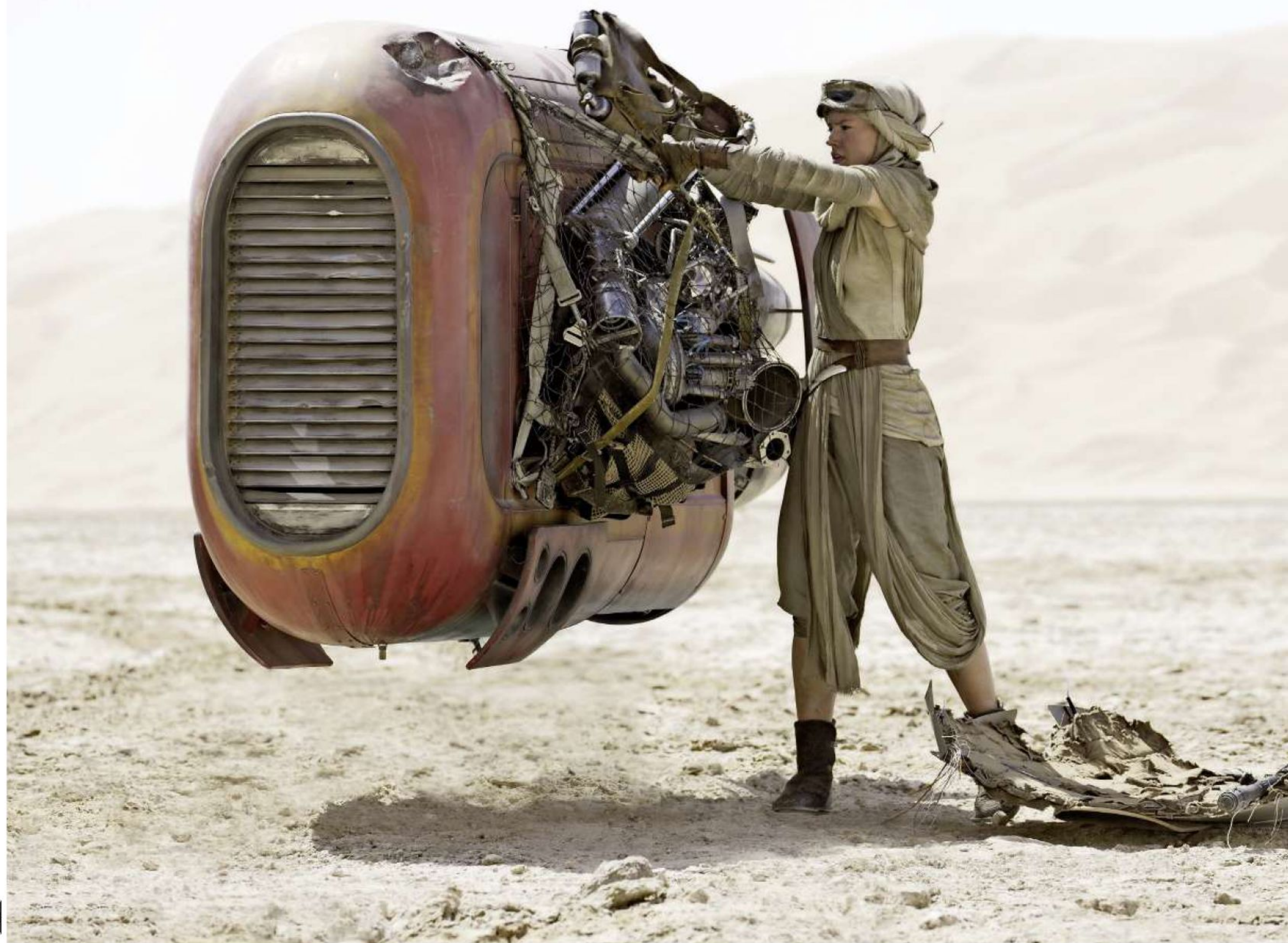
"I just remember leaving the theatre wanting to know more," says Bryan Burk, Abrams' producing partner at Bad Robot. "There were so many things hinted at that implied a much bigger world than you actually saw. Who is Jabba The Hutt? Where is Tosche Station? I love that experience of wanting to lean in and ask more."

Inspired by constant reference to J.W. Rinzler's essential *Making Of...*



The Falcon
outmanoeuvres
TIE Fighters as it
passes through
a fallen Star
Destroyer.





books, this pared-back M.O. also infiltrated the aesthetic, from the number of ship designs, to the amount of creatures filling the frame, to costume designer Michael Kaplan's streamlined stormtrooper look.

"The prequels did so much, but I tried to sort of strip it down and go back to a simpler, more elegant time when there was just the Empire and the Rebellion," says Abrams. "As challenging as it was for designers to bring this movie to life, that represented a focus, helping us not get distracted and throw in the kitchen sink."

Case in point: for Abrams, the lightsaber battles in *Episodes I to III* were "increasingly spectacular and stylised, almost like dance

choreography". So when he came to stage runaway stormtrooper Finn (John Boyega) versus baddie Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) in a snowy forest, he went back to the source.

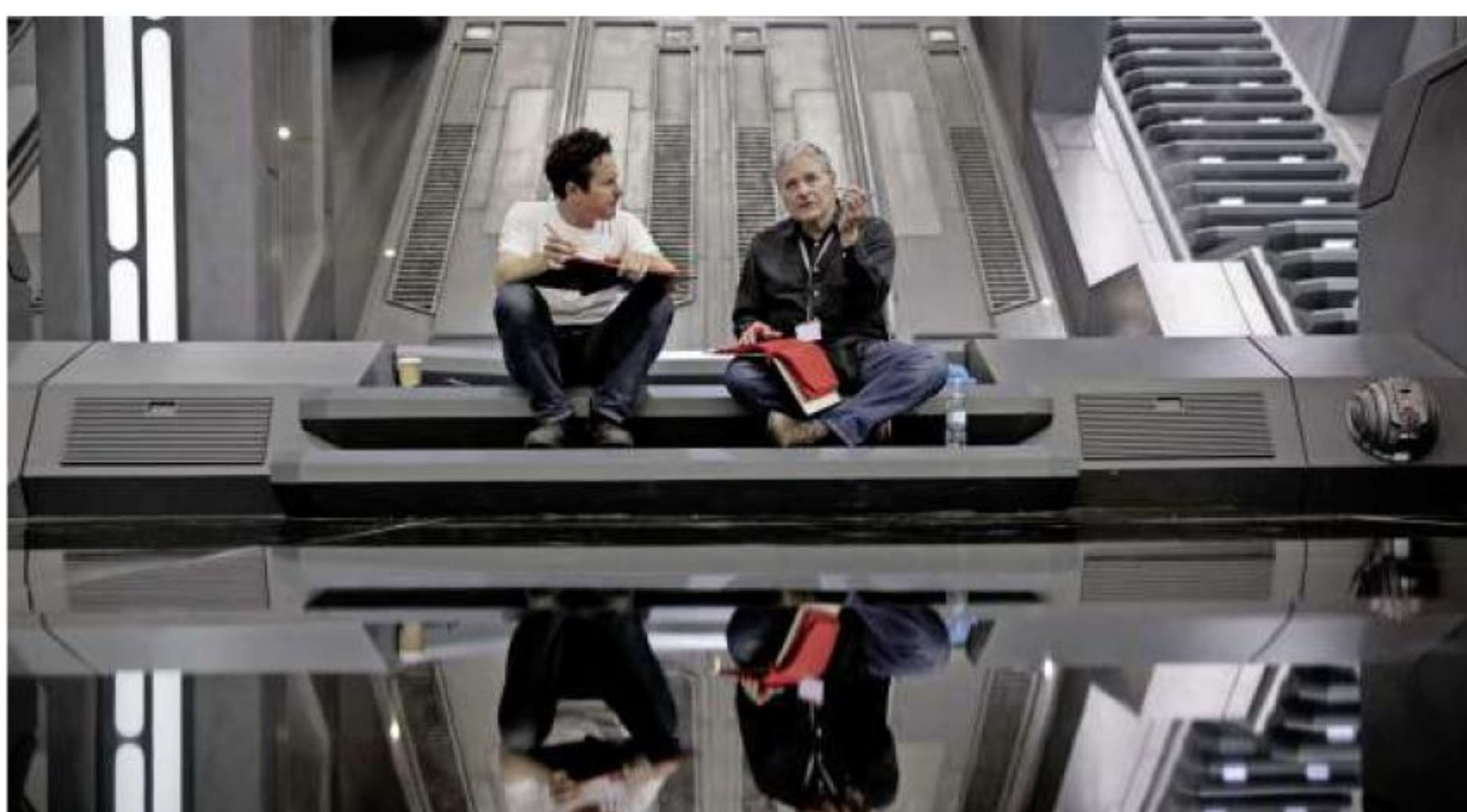
"When you look at *Star Wars* and *Empire*, they are very different lightsaber battles, but for me they felt more powerful because they were not quite as slick. I was hoping to go for something much more primitive, aggressive and rougher, a throwback to the kind of heart-stopping lightsaber fights I remember being so enthralled by as a kid."

Delivering the *Star Wars* you know and love but in a way you have never seen before quickly became Abrams' chief challenge. How do you revitalise space dogfights? You set them in broad

You don't know Jakk: Rey (Daisy Ridley) readies her speeder.

daylight against backdrops shot in Iceland. How do you make the world fall for a robot more than they did for R2-D2? You create BB-8, a droid with the qualities of a naughty child or adorable puppy. And how do you stand toe-to-toe with the greatest villain in movie history? You make your villain, Kylo Ren, a Darth Vader fanboy hell-bent on taking over the Sith's shift.

"You can't top Darth Vader as a bad guy in design or performance," Abrams admits. "Because we needed to have a bad guy, the idea of naming Vader in association with him allowed us to harness the power of Vader in a way that felt appropriate and powerful. It allowed Vader to be part of the conversation rather than a separate one. It imbues Kylo with a special kind of darkness."



THE FORCE AWAKENS started principal photography at 5.38am on May 15, 2014, in Abu Dhabi, doubling for the desert planet Jakku, with resourceful scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley) barrelling along on her speeder that looks like a Magnum. It's like Tatooine but not. The same (moisture vaporators), but different (fallen Star Destroyers).

"It was instantly *Star Wars*-y," jokes Kathleen Kennedy about Abu Dhabi. "Everybody complained about the heat." Executive producer Tommy Harper, meanwhile, recalls how Abrams "wanted the big red sky, the orange ball coming up in the morning. There was a natural wind-flow so stuff would move and look beautiful. When stormtroopers tore

Top: Entering Maz Kanata's castle. **Middle:** J. J. Abrams and co-screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan sit on a shiny Imperial floor. **Above:** Beware the Knights of Ren.

through a trading village, you were transported right back."

Although the unit stayed in Abu Dhabi for only two weeks, the location is indicative of another pillar of the film's aesthetic. Abrams is ditching the CGI-heavy approach of the prequels and returning to the tactile, tangible, practical approach of the First Three. This meant throwing out mismatching eye-lines, pixel-packed creatures and sterile green-screen, while returning to difficult-to-get-to locations, working robots and old-school, men-in-suit aliens. "*Star Wars* was real life to J.J.," says production designer Rick Carter. "He was only 11 years old. When he goes back to it, he just wants to feel something when he is shooting that is authentically there in front of him."



Anthony Daniels is C-3PO

Anthony Daniels was on a boat to Sydney when he picked up a free newspaper and a story caught his eye. "I read that Disney had bought Lucasfilm," he recalls, "and as the journey continued I felt this great weight coming towards me... In a nice way!" His hunch was confirmed when he got a call from Kathleen Kennedy, asking "if it would be okay if J.J. Abrams rang me. As if I might say, 'No!'"

Abrams' first question to Daniels was whether he'd be willing to play his signature role of protocol droid C-3PO as just a voice performance. Daniels refused *that* request, only to discover he was being tested. "J.J. said, 'Quite right!' It's so much more than just the voice. It's a physical performance, too."

For Daniels, *Star Wars* isn't something that ever goes away: he's constantly travelling for events, and enjoys the voice work (especially the "hilarious" LEGO video games). But, he says, it's still wonderful to be back. "The energy at that first read-through was extraordinary," he tells us. "I remember just looking across at Harrison and beaming." But of the newcomers in the cast, his greatest love is for that rollerball droid. "They're all wonderful, but I was instantly smitten with BB-8," he grins. "I couldn't understand how I was seeing what I was seeing. He really is an incredible piece of work." **OWEN WILLIAMS**



Twisted firestarter:
Captain Phasma
(Gwendoline Christie)
tears shift up.





• ILLUSTRATION: SAM KERR

The capture-it-in-camera approach spread to the evolution of the aliens. Realised by *Prometheus* creature designer Neal Scanlan, who came out of retirement especially for the film, the menagerie of *The Force Awakens* ran into the 90s, mixing the latest in animatronic technology with lo-fi put-a-puppet-on-a-seesaw-and-launch-it know-how. "It has a wonderful charm and innocence about it," says Scanlan about the original film. "I can't think of another franchise where you can put someone in a small box with little legs popping out the bottom and it would be accepted. When you look back you think, 'That's quite crude,' but you remember it more fondly than that. We tried to recreate it not the way they were but the way you remember them to be."

What Scanlan created was a form of "real-time theatre". *The Force Awakens*' new creations run the gamut from a 20-foot by 12-foot by 15-foot creature operated by five puppeteers to the robot, nicknamed Big Red, that appears at the end of the last trailer, which is powered by a performer on stilts. Yet Scanlan was "humbled" by an old favourite, Chewbacca, after realising the only way to do it was the old way — knit each individual hair by hand onto a woollen suit. They also made some special modifications to mark the passing of time. "To the aficionados he has a slight paunch, much like my good self," laughs Scanlan. "As you get older things go south, and Chewie isn't immune to that. He is slightly lighter in areas. It's very subtle. We tried to hint that 30 years have passed, a mere moment in a wookiee's life."

Revisiting these so-called "legacy" creatures also made a lasting impact on the wider crew. Yet one made more impact than others. And it wasn't Yarael Poof. "The minute we're doing the Rebel Base and Admiral Ackbar walks in, everything stops," says Kathleen Kennedy. "It's just like having Brad Pitt come onto the stage. Everybody 'oohs' and 'aahs', and then you get on with doing the scene. It was great fun."

IN 1981, RAF GREENHAM Common was the site of a peace camp established by a group of courageous women protesting over the Government's decision to allow cruise missiles to be based there. Thirty-four years later, it played host to a different kind of rebellion. The air base became the home of the Resistance, the new incarnation of the Rebel Alliance, replete with full-size



Andy Serkis is SUPREME LEADER SNOKE

On his first day playing the First Order's enigmatic overlord, Andy Serkis found himself atop a towering podium. His co-stars, Adam Driver and Domhnall Gleeson, were 25 feet below. Yet he had no idea what Snoke even looked like. "It was quite an unusual situation," he says, calling *Empire* from a Canadian "middle of nowhere" where he's shooting *War For The Planet Of The Apes*. "It was one of the most scary film experiences I've ever had."

Whether Snoke is a two-storey-tall giant or a floating spectre, Serkis confirms he is definitely an alien we haven't seen before, and the Emperor Palpatine of this series. "Exactly that. And he's severely damaged. Although he is a powerful leader, he comes across as vulnerable. Very scarred and disfigured."

J. J. Abrams was wary of having any CG characters in his proudly analogue *Star Wars* vision, though with such an "extreme look", as Serkis puts it, he realised it was the only way to do Snoke.

Serkis isn't exactly a *Star Wars* nut, but he is no less thrilled to be joining the pantheon. "Mainly because my younger brother Paul is the world's biggest fan," he says. He confesses he was surprised by the reaction to the first *Force Awakens* trailer, which opened with his narration.

"I don't think I've ever had as much attention. I was like, 'Wow. Okay. This is big, isn't it?'" **DAN JOLIN**





Oscar Isaac is POE DAMERON

The call simply said to meet J. J. in Paris. He had a vague feeling it meant *Star Wars*, but “even that bit was under wraps”. When Oscar Isaac arrived at the Parisian hotel, there were Abrams, Kathleen Kennedy and “Larry” Kasdan, asking him to sit, talking him through the movie, pitching him this role: Poe Dameron, dashing commander of a squadron of X-wings in the Resistance. “I just tried to stay cool and take it in,” Isaac laughs. Man and boy, Isaac couldn’t help being a *Star Wars* fan. Growing up in South Florida, it was a household religion. He has an uncle who still has all the figures in glass cases. “When I told him I got cast,” delights Isaac, “he could barely breathe.” His director’s vision, Isaac reports, is of a very textured world, with nuanced characters. “Poe adds a specific colour to the film. It’s one that’s energetic. There’s almost an old-school, *His Girl Friday*, Cary Grant kind of quickness to it and that speed is something J. J. likes.” The experience, he says, “has defied what I could have expected”. They built two full-sized X-wings with cockpits that sprang open. “You can jump in and fire up!” He may have worked with the Coen brothers, but he’s forever that *Star Wars*-mad kid. “Everywhere you turned you were reminded this was part of a legacy.” **WILLIAM THOMAS**



replica X-wings and a third of a Millennium Falcon exterior.

“Walking around seeing the Falcon, seeing TIE Fighters, you are like kids,” says Burk. “It was particularly hard for J. J. because you are wrestling, ‘I can’t believe I’m doing this,’ with actually having to be the director. Giving direction to Harrison Ford in his Han Solo outfit is just nuts.”

Arriving in the UK, *The Force Awakens* became the most scrutinised shoot of the modern era. When the Falcon was snapped by microlight pilot Matthew Myatt, the Civil Aviation Authority took the unusual step of shutting down airspace after the image went viral. Over-eager nerds tracked the production to the Forest Of Dean and the tiny isle of Skellig Michael. Behind

Poe Dameron (Oscar Isaac) under arrest
— cell block 1138?

closed doors at Pinewood, Cruise, Cumberbatch and Craig reputedly played stormtroopers (“There *are* a couple of famous stormtroopers,” confirms Kennedy) and the great and the good of Hollywood lined up to get a selfie with Chewie (a Chelfie). “Morgan Dameron, who is J. J.’s assistant, used to give tours and it became like the Universal tour,” says Harper. “It was pretty hilarious.”

One stop on the tour might have taken in Abrams, microphone in hand, leading the unit in karaoke or treating the crew to his beatbox stylings. “Every now and then he’d shoot a scene and he’d go, ‘Come on, ladies and gentlemen, we’re shooting *Star Wars*!’ and then everybody burst into applause,” says Kennedy. If you wanted that *Star Wars*



feeling, it was everywhere. You could simply take in the pill-shaped lighting and shiny floors of the evil First Order's HQ ("I don't know how the First Order kept those floors clean," says Rick Carter. "Maybe those little droids are polishing it"), or walk through the corridors, past the chessboard and into the cockpit of the Millennium Falcon.

"It's as exciting as you would think it would be," says Kennedy. "When Harrison walked on and looked around, he turned to J.J. and said: 'It's better than I remembered' — that was like the finest compliment anybody could give us."

To draw the difference between good and evil, there are not only the obvious colour schemes employed by Carter (black, white, grey = First Order; earthy tones = the Resistance) but a nifty bit of

Top: Kylo Ren (Adam Driver) does his best Darth Vader impersonation.

Middle: Finn (John Boyega) faces Ren.

Above: Abrams on location in Abu Dhabi.

technical trickery. "Only a complete geek would notice," says cinematographer Dan Mindel, "but we had lenses specially made based on the mechanics and physics of the lenses the original films used. We used those for the Resistance because it was softer, more forgiving. For the First Order we used a newer lens to give us a harder, more austere look."

If filming started with the light side, it ended with the dark. At 21.30 on November 6, 2014, at Pinewood on S Stage, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* wrapped with Kylo Ren and the Knights of Ren unleashing a 'Force Back'. Don't run to Wookieepedia — a Force Back is a term used by the crew to describe... What exactly?

"We'll just let that dangle, shall we?" says Kennedy.



Carrie Fisher is PRINCESS LEIA

"Nothing has changed except the hair," laughs Carrie Fisher of what we can expect of her return to the role that made her a legend. Or, as she delightfully introduces Leia, "Darth Vader's little girl".

"I wanted little old Leia to walk by a window wearing that hairdo on the way to the bathtub," she continues. "Just show it once. But, no. I guess they thought it would be too distracting."

The point is, Leia may be older, but she is no less the tough, capable galactic princess/Skywalker twin/civil partner to a certain Han Solo. She retains that same spirit, says Fisher, that helped *Star Wars* appeal to women. Leia was a grown-up surrounded by boys.

"A princess is someone who takes responsibility for their life," she says thoughtfully. "I have people come up to me and say that my character inspired them to live their lives the way they did." With J.J. Abrams' careful guidance, the character has felt like second nature.

"I am Princess Leia. Princess Leia is me," she says. "It's like a Möbius strip. My life has informed who she is, and she's informed who I am and who I've had to be. A lot of her demeanour, her passion and her willingness to go on, I've found in me."

As for teaming up again with Mark Hamill and Harrison Ford? Well, they had a ball.

Fisher beams, "It was a *Star Wars* high-school reunion." **WILLIAM THOMAS**



Meet Constable Zuvio,
a hard-as-nails law
officer keeping
order on Jakku.





• ILLUSTRATION: SAM KERR



N OCTOBER 19, *THE Force Awakens*' third trailer debuted during the New York Giants versus Philadelphia

Eagles game. It was viewed 112 million times in just 24 hours and received rave reviews. Except the director still had what he terms a "slight concern".

"It doesn't show any indication of how much fun the movie is," says Abrams. "It makes it feel big, dark and important. But there's a critical component for me in *Star Wars* which is you are laughing. You are loving these people and they are making you smile."

For Abrams, *Star Wars* is as much a "comedy as it was a romance as it was an adventure as it was a parable", but believes it is "the humour that lets the movie take flight even more than the action". At the same time, Abrams has wrestled with how much *The Force Awakens* should pay reference to previous instalments. His rule of thumb for call-backs was to restrict them to "things we felt could happen". So Han Solo confirming the existence of the Force — "It's true. All of it" — to Rey and Finn while standing by the same console at which he debunked the Force to Luke and Ben felt, for Abrams, like a "beautiful symmetry".

"It gives me chills because that's how life is," he continues. "You learn your wife is pregnant in the same room you learn of a parent's death. It's a cycle. It felt right."

If the trailer introduces the idea of *Star Wars* mythology as urban legend, there are some things in the film that didn't make the last trailer:

1. Lupita Nyong'o's pirate queen Maz Kanata: "She has been a smuggler for a long time and has been running this watering hole for a thousand years. She is the sort of barkeep you go to for help," says Abrams. Kanata's castle, also glimpsed in the trailer, is festooned with flags that chart a history of *Star Wars* tribes and factions.

2. Andy Serkis' Big Bad, Supreme Leader Snoke: "I will say this one spoiler-y thing: he was critical in the seduction of Ren to the dark side. He is a hugely important part of the story and will continue to be."

3. And of course, Luke Skywalker, the no-show poster boy of *The Force Awakens*. "I love that anyone cares," Abrams says about the Jedi's absence. "It was always the thought to keep our powder dry but it wasn't to make people crazy. We did it because it was appropriate for the story."



Lupita Nyong'o is MAZ KANATA

"It gives you a unique opportunity to play a role that is not restricted to your visible attributes or circumstances," says Lupita Nyong'o of playing her mo-capped alien pirate, Maz Kanata. "I was interested in that extra flexing of my imagination to create a totally different body than my own."

In the case of Kanata, it's a body which, when we speak in August, she still hasn't seen in its final form. "I saw her develop, so it's been really interesting to see where it's gotten to today." Nyong'o herself was involved in that development process. "They were very welcoming and open to ideas," she says, though adding, "At a certain point as the layman you can't see how it can get cooler."

Naturally, it wasn't just the performance capture that attracted her. It was also the chance to become part of a galaxy she so cherished. "What I loved about the movies is that George Lucas created this incredibly rich other-world with such a diversity of culture and experience and politics," she says. "It welcomes and embraces everyone." She recalls the moment in *Return Of The Jedi* when she heard Lando's co-pilot, Nien Nunb, speaking in Kikuyu, the language of Kenya's largest ethnic group. "Me and all my friends were screaming, 'We're in *Star Wars*! We're part of it!' That, I think, is the power of *Star Wars*." JAMES WHITE





Peter Mayhew is CHEWBACCA

Peter Mayhew once joked that all he had to do to get cast as Chewbacca was stand up. At a towering 7' 3", the London-born Mayhew was a shoo-in for Chewie. *The Force Awakens* marks Mayhew's fifth big-screen appearance as the Wookiee's Wookiee, and he couldn't be happier about it. "All the fans had been asking, 'Is Chewie in the new film?'" he says. "So it was lovely to be able to say, 'Yes.' And it was wonderful to go back and see everybody. All the old gang were there."

Mayhew last donned the famous yak-hair suit in 2005's *Revenge Of The Sith*, but it's been 32 years since he teamed up with Harrison Ford in *Return Of The Jedi*.

"I was sitting in my trailer," he says, recalling his first day on set of *The Force Awakens*. "There was a knock on the door and someone shouted, 'Where's that walking carpet?' It was Harrison. He came in, gave me a big hug and said, 'Welcome back.'"

Something else that has changed very little over the last three decades is Chewie and Han's relationship. "We still have the same bond," says Mayhew. "We look after each other." He howls with laughter when he hears how Ford describes them. "We are like an old married couple! Especially when we're in the cockpit together. I like it." **SIMON BRAUND**



IF YOU THINK YOU THINK about *Star Wars* a lot, imagine how much Abrams has had to ponder every corner of that universe. "J. J. asked me to move a seam on Kylo Ren's costume," recalls costume designer Michael Kaplan. "It is the first time a director has ever asked me to do that."

So while his cast and crew were trying on stormtrooper helmets, there was little time for Abrams to indulge his inner nerd. "It's not to say I wasn't always loving working on this movie, but when your job is make to sure the scene on the Millennium Falcon is working, there's not really the desire to sit in the cockpit and pretend you are flying it," he levels. "I think the most *Star Wars* thing I did working on this was to try and do my job the best I could for the fans and for new fans."

There might be another reason for Abrams' targeting device focus. By

Top: A First Order TIE Fighter pilot.
Middle: Rey strips down a Star Destroyer... Above: ... And crossing the dunes of Jakku with BB-8.

concentrating on the minutiae, it might save him from thinking about the bigger picture. One hundred and twelve million trailer views means there are 112 million different movies playing in people's heads. How do you begin to satisfy them all? Then there is *The Fiscal Imperative* (not the working title for *Episode I*). Read any trade journal and the narrative currently being spun suggests if *The Force Awakens* doesn't surpass *Avatar*'s box office, or reach \$2 billion, or secure World Peace, it has failed.

"I feel like the expectations are on some level incredibly exciting, while on another they are absolutely terrifying," says Abrams. "The gift of being able to work on this movie comes at a cost, and the cost is there is a preposterous level of expectation, not least of which is financial. People are putting into the press what the numbers are going to be so whatever the number is, it's a disappointment."

Tommy Harper describes it as "a movie but not a movie. It's a massive business. You have someone like (*Disney Chairman/CEO*) Bob Iger who is so hands-on and great, but you are like, 'Oh my gosh, this guy just spent \$4 billion on this franchise.' You step back and you think, 'Okay this is much bigger than us.'"

The immediate future for both Abrams and *Star Wars* is clear. He is transitioning to an executive producer-advisory role for *Episode VIII*, leaving the job of director to Rian Johnson, who Abrams confidently predicts will "kill it" (not in a murder-it-stone-cold-dead sense). Away from the main Skywalker storyline directed by Johnson and then *Jurassic World*'s Colin Trevorrow for *Episode IX*, there are Gareth Edwards' war movie *Rogue One*, Phil Lord and Chris Miller's young Han Solo movie ("It moves closer to the Western genre," says Kennedy) and further films based on whichever other characters are deemed spin-off worthy (Boba Fett/Yoda/Gamorrean Guard No. 2). Still, how far they all go to some degree rests on the less-is-more, familiar-but-fresh shoulders of *The Force Awakens*.

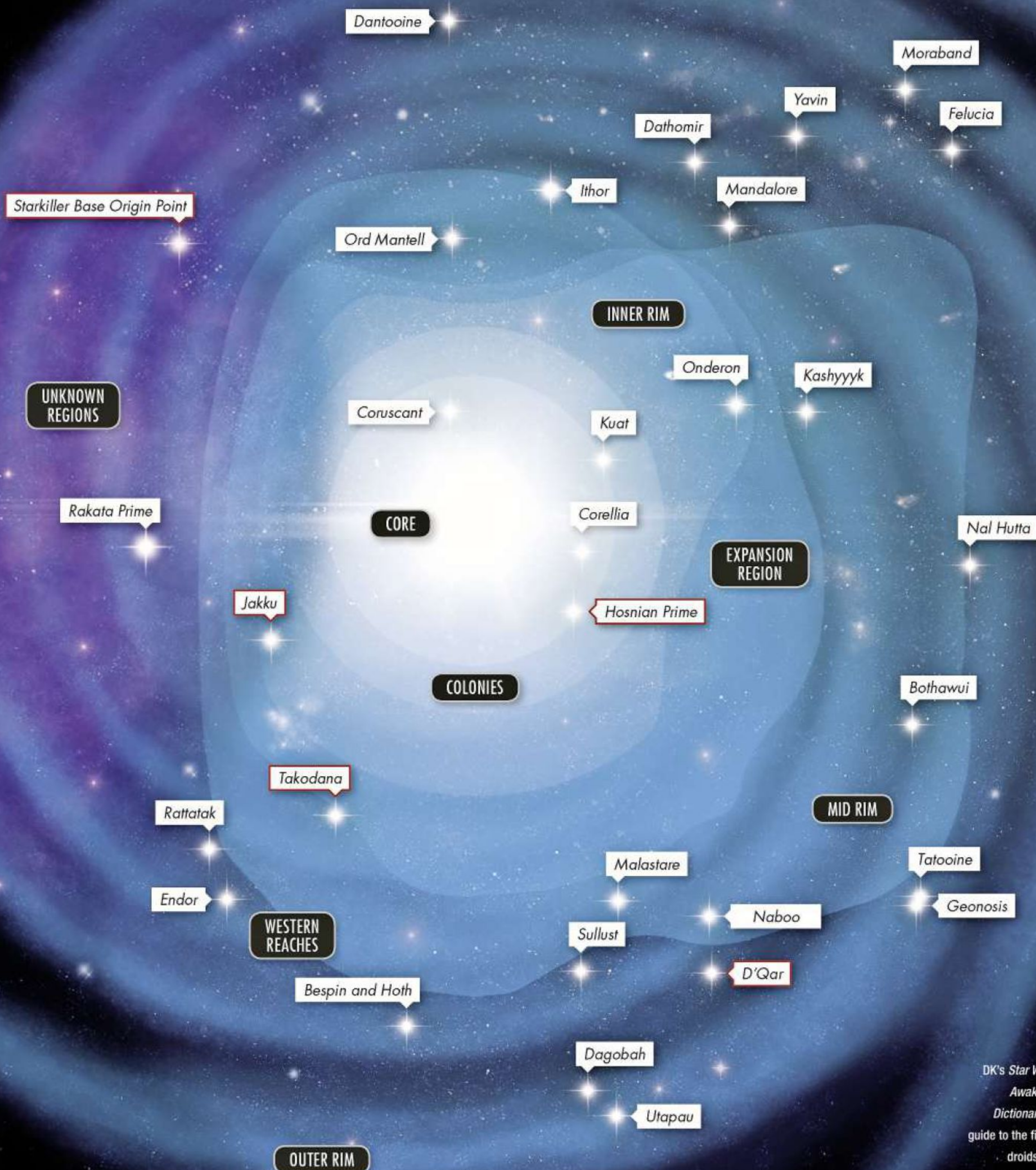
"As well as I hope it does, the truth of it for me is that I would love for people, notably younger people, to see this movie and feel like they see themselves in it," says Abrams as the dubbing session calls. "I want them to leave the theatre like I did when I was young, feeling anything is possible." ■

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS IS OUT ON DECEMBER 17 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.

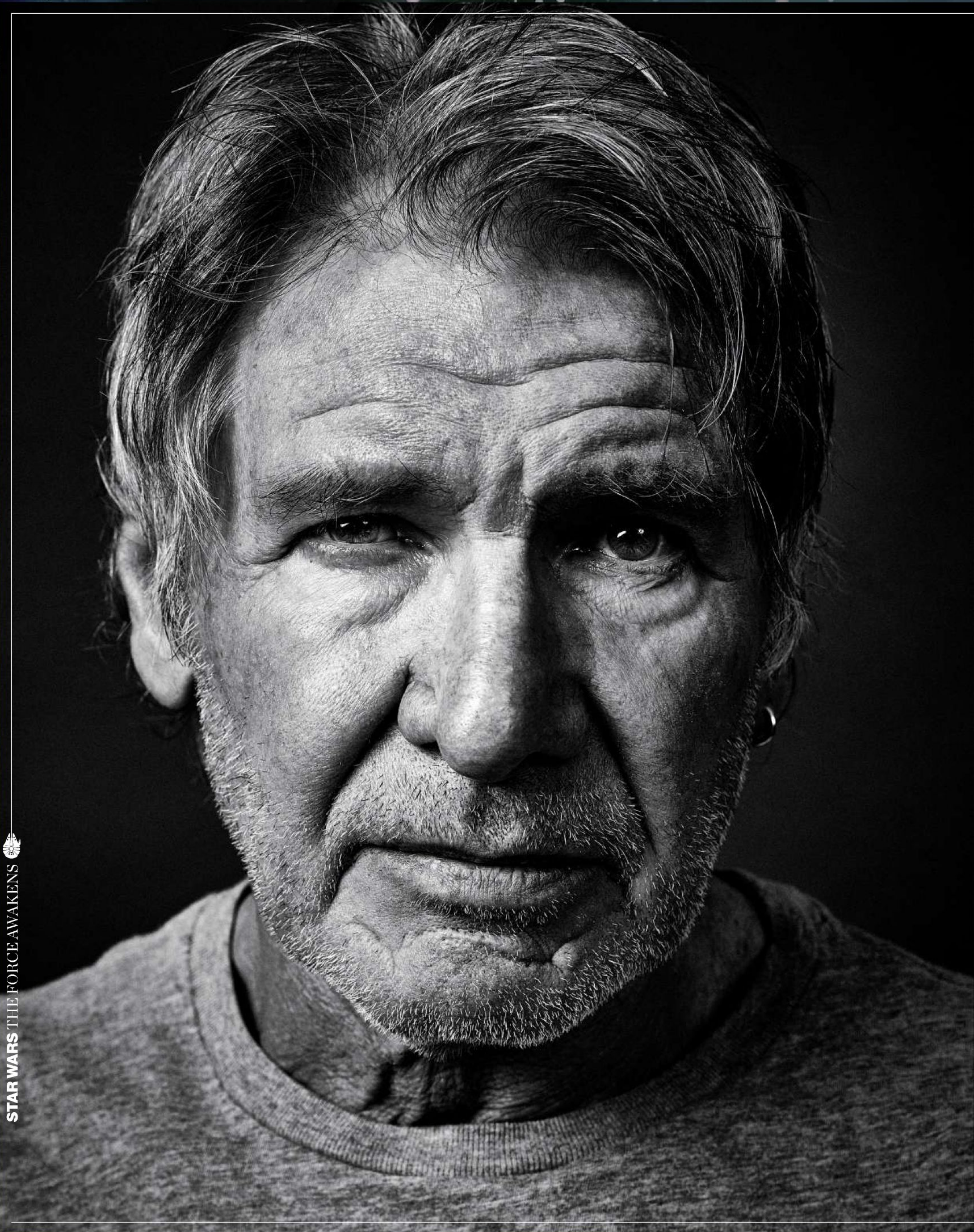
MAP TO THE STARS

The official navigation aid to the galaxy far, far away — including planets old and new (we mean *really* new)

EMPIRE
SPOILER
ALERT!



DK's *Star Wars: The Force Awakens: The Visual Dictionary* is the official guide to the film's creatures, droids, locations and technology. It is out on December 18.

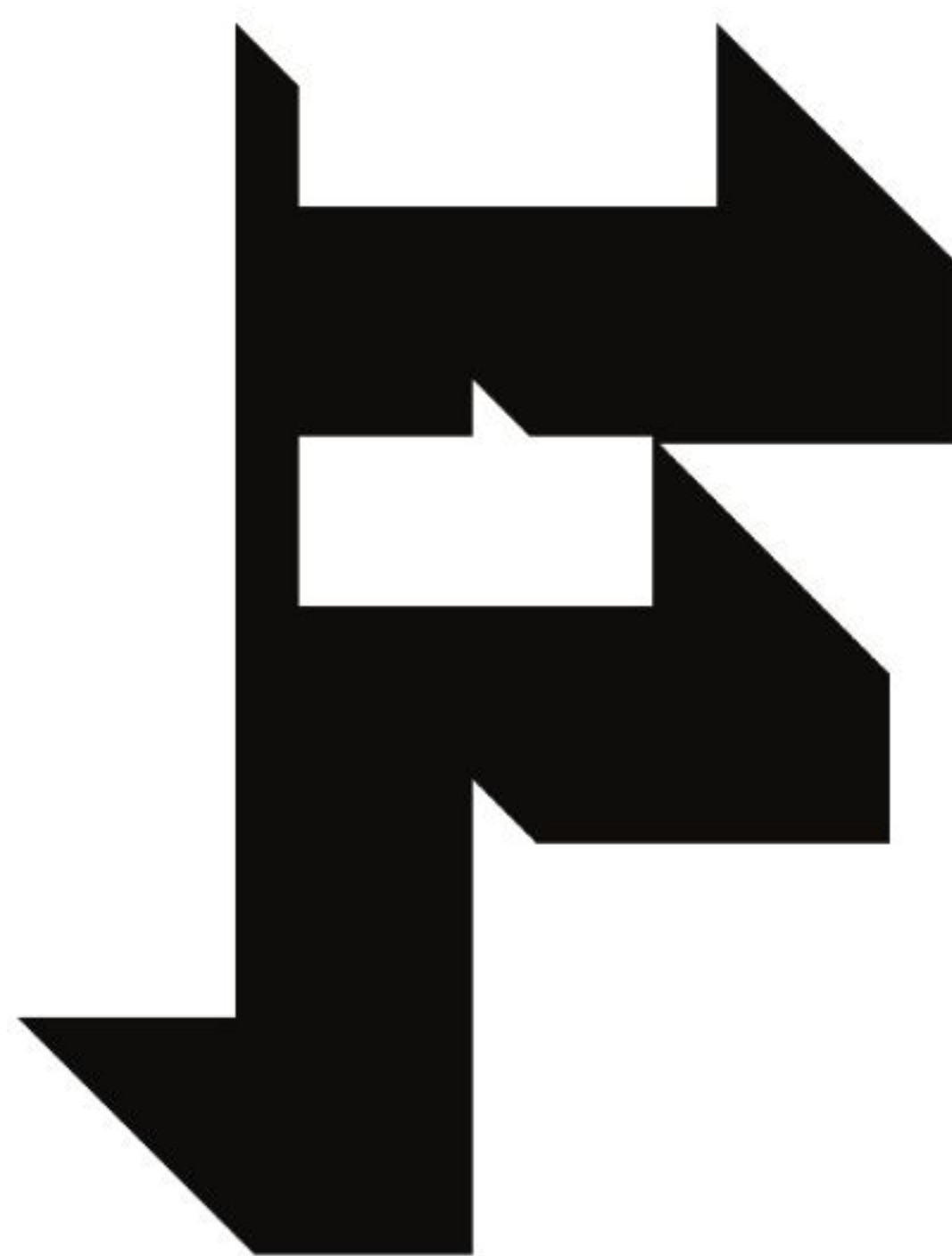




GOING \$OLO

New millennium, same old Falcon. Everybody's favourite scruffy-looking nerf herder is finally back at the controls. *Empire* meets **Harrison Ford** to relive a long-awaited reunion. "It was as warm and fuzzy as you might imagine..."

WORDS SIMON BRAUND
PORTRAIT ANDY GOTTS



FOR A MAN WHO FAMOUSLY TOLD GEORGE LUCAS, “YOU can type this shit, but you can’t say it,” and who once admitted to *Empire* that he was “less than thrilled with the teddy-bear parade” that concluded his last appearance as Han Solo, Harrison Ford is today surprisingly effusive about the cinematic saga that brought him fame. When we speak at his LA home, his dogs barking merrily away in the background, he punctuates his slow, deliberate speech with bursts of barely suppressed chuckles. (Though, in retrospect, maybe he’s just looking forward to his appearance on Jimmy Kimmel’s Hallowe’en show later that day, for which he will dress as a hot dog...) Still, throughout our hour with him, Ford remains characteristically forthright. While he tells us that, to him, *Star Wars* represents filmmaking of the highest order, with a moral rigour that still has life lessons to teach us, he simply does not have the same emotional attachment to Han Solo as we do. To us, Han is an idol, the subject of action figures, posters and pencil-case stickers, a paragon of sardonic, macho cool we spend our entire lives trying to emulate. To Ford he’s a character he played in a movie. Albeit one who exerted monumental influence on his life and career and to whom he is, in his own words, delighted to return.

What was your reaction when you first heard that an *Episode VII* was going to happen?

I was keen to see a script. I first heard about it when I got a call from George. He asked me whether I’d be interested in doing it and I said that, all things being equal, of course I would. Then there was a long gap. It took a while before anything was produced. By that time things were in flux with Disney and it was proposed that J. J. Abrams would direct the film.

What were your feelings about that?

I was delighted. I’ve been a fan of his for a long time.

Do you remember your first conversation with J. J. about it?

Nope, I don’t. But it would’ve been about the script he and Lawrence (*Kasdan*) were writing. After I read the script there were further discussions, of course. I was engaged, satisfied and delighted to be involved.

When you first read the script, were you as intrigued as everyone else to discover where Han, Leia, Luke and the rest find themselves 30 years on?

Well, I come at this from a somewhat different perspective to most people (*laughs*). It’s a job. I’m interested in it for a great many reasons, but I don’t approach it the same way as an audience would. I’m very grateful that there *is* an audience, and their feelings and attitudes about the series and about



the characters are very important to me. Nevertheless, they’re not consistent with the way I think about things. I’m looking at it as a professional. I’m hired to make this shit work (*laughs*).

Of all the characters you’ve played though, is Han Solo not one who’s particularly close to your heart?

Work is close to my heart. Han Solo is a great character, I recognise his virtues, I recognise the value that he’s had in my career and the part he’s played in the films. But revisiting him was not an automatic jumping into the fray. I wanted to be convinced, by reading the script, that through Han I’d be able to bring something more to the project overall. Listen, I can take any wildly enthusiastic fan story and turn it into completely boring shit. I can also make shit up, but I don’t tend to do that.

Having been such an integral part of it, are you still amazed at how *Star Wars* has become ingrained in almost every aspect of the culture? It’s hard to think of anything else that even comes close. To paraphrase John Lennon, you’re bigger than The Beatles...

It doesn’t really amaze me. I’m just delighted that it has enjoyed the enormous popularity it has.

It’s a big question, but how do you account for that?

I put it down to a large number of factors, including the introduction of a strongly constructed mythology that informs us about our own potential. It gives us an example of what can be achieved through courage and conviction and facing up to the struggles that are part of all of our lives. At the same time, it’s all wrapped up in a fantastic world beyond our imagining. It also has great filmmaking and interesting characters. And much to my delight, it’s been passed on from generation to generation.

It’s hard to go through a day without encountering some reference to *Star Wars*. Do you feel a swelling of pride or get a lump in your throat whenever you





see the Falcon strafing the Death Star or hear John Williams' opening fanfare?

No, no. I'm much more disposed to think, "What a great score." I appreciate how powerful it is, what craftsmanship and imagination is involved in it. I don't take pride in it personally.

How was your first day on the set of *The Force Awakens*?

It was a fairly light day, as first days tend to be. It was Chewie and I back on board the Millennium Falcon at the beginning of our meeting with Daisy (*Ridley*) and John (*Boyega*), or the characters that Daisy and John play.

Did being back at the controls of the Falcon, Chewie at your side, bring any emotions or memories flooding back?

I don't suppose it did. We were involved in the minutiae of getting words off the page and onto the screen.

Top: "It's fun to stay at the YM..." Han (Ford) and Chewie (Peter Mayhew), business as usual.
Above: The Resistance is futile — Han and Leia (Carrie Fisher) on the new Rebel base.

What was the atmosphere like between the returning cast?

It was friendly, collegial. As warm and fuzzy as you might imagine. It was great to see old friends.

When was the last time you'd seen any of them?

I probably hadn't seen Mark for some years. I occasionally run into Carrie, but I don't see anybody that often.

How has Han's relationship with Chewie evolved over the years? They must be like an old married couple by now.

They were like an old married couple to start with. I think people will find them very much the same as ever.

You had quite a serious accident while at Pinewood...

Yeah. J. J. and I were standing in a doorway on set discussing a scene. We had no idea the set was active. Suddenly the door came down and trapped me under it, my dislocated ankle and broken leg on one side, the rest of me on the other.

What was it like being back in the *Star Wars* universe without the guiding hand of George Lucas?

George was involved in the development of the script. It had George's genius behind it, and he left us in a very good position to pass things on to a new director. I was very comfortable with J. J., having known him since he wrote *Regarding Henry*. He was very involved in that production. I felt George had made his choices and I was comfortable with that as well.

Do you feel he was with you in spirit?

As the creator of the myth we were tending, his imprimatur was on everything. So yes, if you will, he was with us in spirit.

How did you find working with J. J. as a director? Did he remind you of George in any way?

George is George and J. J. is J. J.. They're very different people, they have a different energy and a different working style. It was a pleasure to work with J. J., to see how he managed the set, got the work done, communicated with actors and crew. He's very fluid and very collaborative.

Were you especially happy with his decision to capture the tone of the originals, keeping CGI to a minimum?

Yeah, I thought that was a wise move. I think for actors it's nice to work in a physical environment. My only problem with CGI is when it gets out of hand, when it's too kinetic and less focused on the emotional communication between the characters and the audience. Sometimes you lose, for want of a better term, human scale.

Do you think, as many people do, that that was a problem with the *Star Wars* prequels?

I wasn't there. I wouldn't deign to criticise anyone else's work.

There's a huge amount of secrecy surrounding *The Force Awakens*. Has it been difficult keeping things under wraps?

Not for me. I'm generally pretty tight-lipped. And I think it's best if the audience comes to see it with as few preconceptions as possible. Wouldn't you agree?

Absolutely. What are your impressions of the new crop of *Star Wars* stars?

I think they're a wonderful additions to the Star Wars world. Daisy and John are wonderful in the movie, their characters are fascinating. Oscar (*Isaac*) is extremely compelling on screen, he's got great energy and great clarity. Adam (*Driver*) is really >

interesting and complicated, he brings a very rich emotional life to the character... I mean he gives the character a very interesting and complicated emotional life, not that he brings his *own* interesting and complex emotional life to the project. From my point of view, the movie is very well cast.

Do you think it was a smart decision to cast unknowns in the leading roles, as it was with the original?

You can hardly call Oscar Isaac an unknown. But if you're referring to John and Adam and Daisy, they're clearly new faces, Daisy more so than John. I think it was a brilliant idea. But I don't think it comes down to casting unknown actors, I think it was a case of choosing people with enormous potential and talent.

What was the atmosphere like between the newcomers and the old guard? Did they treat you with proper reverence and awe?

I would not have noticed if they did. We had a job to do. They were fully engaged in doing their job and I was fully engaged in doing mine. I don't really relate to that kind of thing anyway.

So if there was due reverence and awe, you didn't notice it?

Well, you know, they helped me across the street, they helped me tie my shoes. All the things you'd do for an old person.

Given your diverse and illustrious career, does it bother you that you're still associated with two roles more than any other, Han Solo and Indiana Jones?

It's player's choice. It's not something I really think about. My memory encompasses everything I've done. I'm very grateful for the success those franchises have brought me, and for the success other films have brought me. I did, how many, three Jack Ryans?

Two.

Okay, two Jack Ryans (*laughs*). But I don't think of being defined by [Han and Indy], I think of the wonderful opportunities they've given me to do other things. If I *did* think about it, would it bother me? The answer to that is... As given.

If you *had* to be defined by just two characters, you could do worse than two of cinema's most iconic figures.

It's better than a slap in the belly with a wet fish.

It seems they're going ahead with the new Indiana Jones movie...

They are?! Who told you that? You're not keeping up.

You're saying they're *not* going ahead with *Indy 5*?

No, there is a new Indy movie in preparation. I think Steven (*Spielberg*) has answered all the questions on that. You should check out his comments.

What motivated some of your more recent choices, *Anchorman 2*, *Cowboys & Aliens* and *Expendables 3*...?

(*Laughs*) I've always enjoyed doing different kinds of films and they were very short jobs. Well, *Cowboys & Aliens* was a full feature but I very much enjoyed working with [Jon] Favreau and Daniel Craig. And I enjoyed playing that character, a very different character to those I normally play. I enjoyed being part of Will Ferrell's wild and wacky world, even though I only worked for one day on *Anchorman*. I did *Expendables 3* for the hell of it. I was on my way to Indonesia to do a documentary on conservation and Bulgaria was on the way.



Top: "That's no moon..." Classic *Star Wars* Moment #2,187. Middle: As the man in the hat for *Indiana Jones And The Temple Of Doom*. Above: As the man in the bigger hat for *Cowboys & Aliens*.

***Blade Runner 2* is finally happening. What are your thoughts on that?**

I'm delighted. It's a very good script, a very good cast and I'm looking forward to it. We start shooting in late September of next year.

Will you be back for *Episode VIII*?

You can't ask that question.

Do you mean you can't answer it?

No. *You* can't ask it. We've already established that we both think it's best to allow the audience to experience the story rather than be told about it in advance. It doesn't serve the audience for me to answer direct questions about outcomes.

Have you seen the finished film yet?

I've seen a good bit of it, in various stages.

And?

And I think it's going to be a great ride. ■

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THE MAKE-UP OF MAKE-UP ARTISTS

THE NEW HOPES

As the fresh-faced leads in the new *Star Wars*, you'd think the pressure on **John Boyega** and **Daisy Ridley** is unbearable... Though, when *Empire* meets them, they're having the time of their lives

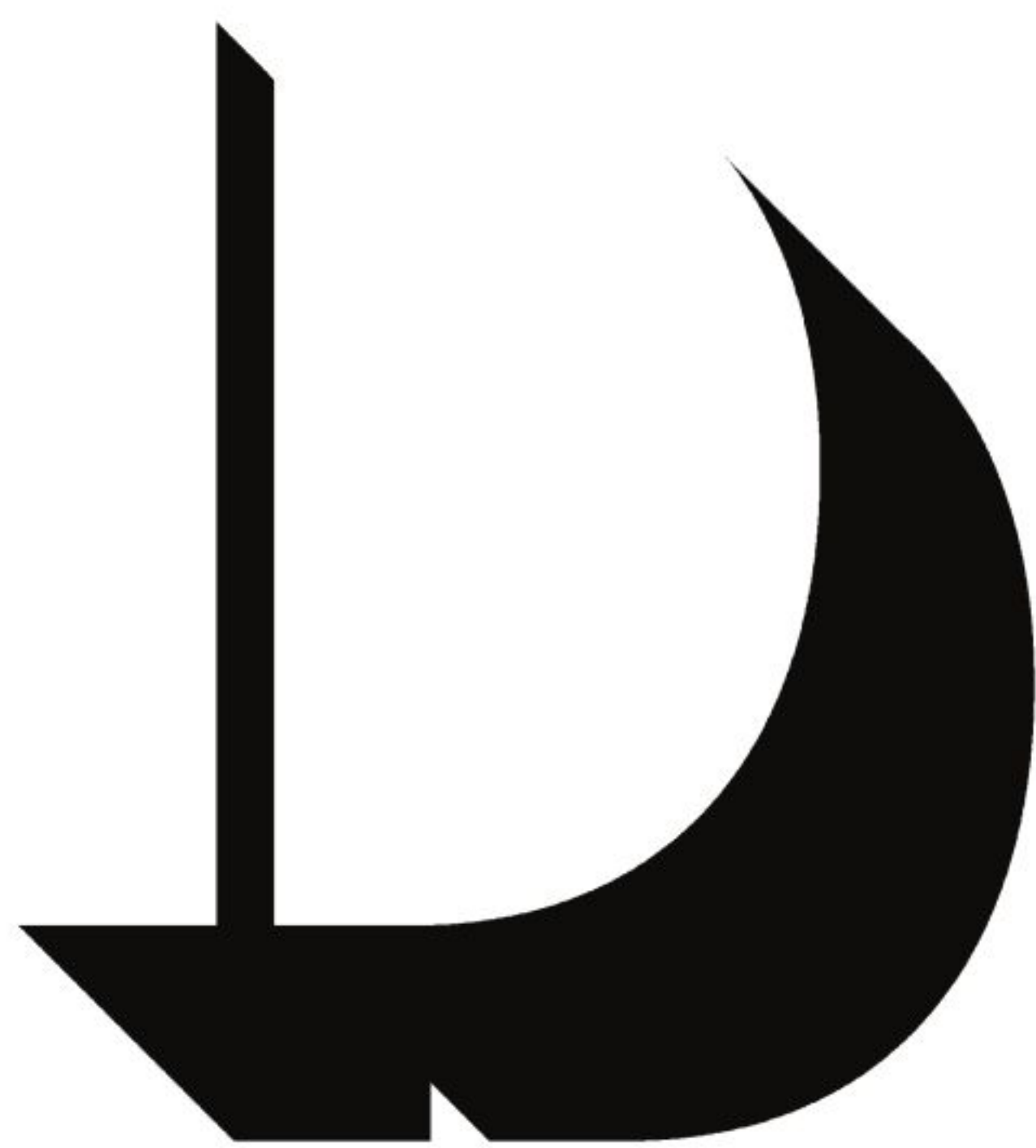


WORDS JAMES DYER

PORTRAIT BRIAN BOWEN SMITH



• © LUCASFILM 2015



DAISY RIDLEY IS GESTICULATING LIKE A JAWA MID-haggle. The star of *The Force Awakens* is a whirlwind of anecdotes and gestures, words falling around us like a planetary bombardment. John Boyega, on the other hand, is a picture of calm serenity. He reclines casually in his chair, one hand hooked in the pocket of a leather jacket and a broad, toothy grin on his face.

She is known mainly for cooing over a pair of calfskin gloves in a single episode of *Mr Selfridge*. He for running through South London wearing a dead-alien backpack as Moses in Joe Cornish's *Attack The Block*. Now, as Rey and Finn, the headline duo of J. J. Abrams' *Star Wars*, the pair are poised to conquer the galaxy. Although you wouldn't know it to meet them.

Sat in a suite at London's Corinthia Hotel, the pair are disarmingly down-to-earth for people headlining the biggest movie release in ten years. Boyega and Ridley will soon adorn every bus shelter and billboard from Piccadilly Circus to Hollywood Boulevard. They will be two of the most recognisable stars in the world. But as the pair chinwag amicably about Harrison Ford and giggle at the expressions on their respective action figures, the enormity of their imminent stardom has yet to fully sink in.

Where were you both when you found out you'd landed parts in *Star Wars*?

Boyega: I got an email from J. J. telling me to come down to Mayfair. So I travelled down and met him and Larry Kasdan in this café. J. J. started thanking me for my patience and for coming back so many times. I was just staring at the table, counting the cubes of sugar in a dish and thinking, "Is it a yes or is it a no?" Then he told me that I would be the new star of *Star Wars*. You can't do a backflip in a public café, so I walked all the way from Mayfair to Tottenham Court Road just feeling crazy. I called my agent and was literally in tears.

Ridley: I was watching *Oedipus Rex*, which one of my friends was in. I was at an audition earlier in the day and J. J. had texted me, "Good luck." I was like, "What does this mean? Does this mean you're saying, 'Good luck 'cause I'm not giving you the role?'" So I was at the theatre and missed his call! When I saw it, first I had to Google how to call America — I didn't know. Then I called him and he wasn't there. By this point, I was also aware that I was missing the show my friend was in. Finally he called me back and then he told me. And said I had to go back in and watch the second half of *Oedipus Rex*, not telling anyone what had just happened. I wasn't allowed to talk about it.

Boyega: You know what? I told a taxi driver.

Ridley: You just said, "I've got a part in *Star Wars*?"

Boyega: I did. A random dude driving a black cab. But he's kept his mouth shut 'til now, so it's all good.



Ridley: I told my mum and my sister. My sister didn't believe me. I told my dad and he just said, "I was always a *Trek* man." Cheers, Dad.

The audition process must have been long and painful. What were you doing during all the months of waiting?

Ridley: I was working at a pub! I actually got my first audition when I was doing *Mr Selfridge*, I think. But there was a lot of time in-between. There were only five auditions across seven months so I was pulling pints for most of it.

Boyega: I was training. Running around, reading the scripts, waiting to hear back. It was a long process. And rightly so.

How did you first encounter *Star Wars*?

Boyega: I had a Darth Maul toy. I just liked the way the guy looked. I didn't realise he's part of, like, this big thing called *Star Wars*. You kind of fall into the world where your favourite toy comes from, though. So it was comic books and the TV shows and then I watched *The Phantom Menace* and the other prequels. I didn't know anything about the originals.

Ridley: I watched them, but I wasn't a huge fan. But that's because I'm not really a huge fan of anything. I've never really felt the fervour that people do about musicians or film stars or anything. That's just because of how I was brought up. My mum saw it for the first time after her finals at uni, though. It was the afternoon and she came out like, "What did I just see?" She was just so taken aback. Oh, and my hairdresser's dad is (*The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return Of The Jedi* *First AD*) David Tomblin!



The first time everything went public was with that now-famous first image of the read-through...

Boyega: You know, the funny thing about that picture is you see everyone talking and you think, "Maybe they're having a really deep discussion." But we're all talking about toast or something! Like, "Oh yeah? Do you like it with the butter? Oh wow, okay, cool."

Ridley: I was actually looking at the picture yesterday and I couldn't see where (*Carrie Fisher's French bulldog*) Gary is. I remember really trying to concentrate but Gary had a bone and it was just (*makes loud slurping noises*) the whole way through. Gross. During the picture I think Gary was drinking Anthony Daniels' water over the other side of the room.

Boyega: I'd finished a gruesome training session and I had to get dressed quickly to come down to do the read-through. The funny thing is my script... You know, they put the scripts in these big black files? Mine was back-to-front and upside-down. I thought that this was the last audition! Like, maybe they were testing me. "Okay, let's see if he can do this."

That was the first time the world saw the original stars and the new generation together. What was it like meeting them?

Boyega: It was great. I mean, we were rehearsing, doing combat training and Harrison Ford just walked in and introduced himself. We had dinners and hung out on set.

Ridley: I met Harrison the week before the photo, I think. Then we'd all gone for dinner. Like, everyone. What's funny

Ex-stormtrooper Finn (John Boyega) with resourceful scavenger Rey (Daisy Ridley).

is Andy Serkis came and I'd just seen his wife (*Lorraine Ashbourne*) on stage. So I was like, "Oh, you're cool, but oh my God! Andy, move aside. Lorraine!"

Which of the original *Star Wars* characters were you most drawn to?

Ridley: Oh, I think the cast as a whole. The whole thing was an ensemble and even though they all had their own adventures, it was very much a group thing.

Boyega: My favourite character's Han Solo. So wherever Han's at, that's where I'm at. I love the fact that this guy's not trying to get involved in any of this mystical stuff. He's like, "I'm not trying to fight the greater good. I just wanna go home, make some money on the way." I like that about him. It's very real. That's what most of us would be doing. Don't lie. You guys wouldn't go up against Darth Vader. You wouldn't do any of that stuff.

Describe your first day on set.

Ridley: My first day was in Abu Dhabi. And when we drove onto set there were speeders everywhere and creatures walking around...

Boyega: I was walking for the whole day. No dialogue whatsoever. I was just walking. In the armour. In the heat. I kept thinking, "This is a *Star Wars* movie. Like, this is gonna be in the cinemas. People are gonna go to the movies and see this film!" It was surreal, like, "We're actually doing this."

How did you feel the first time you picked up the lightsaber?

Boyega: Man, the lightsaber came in this case. These guys brought it out and I'm like, "Now's the moment. Now's the time." I held it in my hand and I felt, you know, the clouds open up and the white doves come flying down. It feels very, very good. I hugged it for the whole day. I didn't allow anyone to hold it but me.

Ridley: I had *my* weapon, too. My staff. I mean, I think that's kind of more dangerous than a 'saber. In a crowd you're just hitting everyone everywhere you go.

It comes with your action figure...

Ridley: Have you seen John's Instagram? He's maybe got 300 figures of himself at various points around his house.

Boyega: Yeah, there's a talking Finn and I've got the Finn Bobble-head. Apparently Finn is selling a good level. The figures are up there with BB-8 and Kylo Ren. We're doing well!

Ridley: It's crazy, being on a stamp and stuff.

Boyega: Someone from Disneyland tweeted me and said, "Hey, you're a balloon now." I don't care about the action figure — a balloon? Yes!

Is it strange to think that, once this film — along with its stamps and balloons — comes out, any chance at anonymity will come to an end?

Boyega: I still walk around, you know? I went to Tesco yesterday and there was an old couple who were like, "There's that young lad from the *Star Wars* trailer." But apart from that, it's been fine so far.

Ridley: I still get the bus to work. I'm actually looking forward to the time where my bus has a poster and I'm like, "Hee, hee, hee, I'm on here but no-one knows I'm on here!" I'm at the beginning of the bus route, so I can just get on and sit in the back, read my book, get off and go to the gym.

Boyega: I'm never giving up on Uber. That's not happening. I'm still gonna go catch those Ubers all around town. Although I might find my black cab driver again. He's my guy. He can keep a secret. I'm gonna tell him how *VII* ends. I'm gonna tell him everything from now on! ■

TO THE HILT

An elegant weapon for a more civilised age... We raid the Lucasfilm archives to reveal the glorious variety of lightsaber handles from *Episodes I* through *VII*



Darth Maul
The Phantom Menace (1999)



Qui-Gon Jinn
The Phantom Menace (1999)



Mace Windu
The Phantom Menace (1999) and *Attack Of The Clones* (2002)



Obi-Wan Kenobi
The Phantom Menace (1999) and *Attack Of The Clones* (2002)



Agen Kolar
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



Saesee Tiin
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



Ki-Adi-Mundi
The Phantom Menace (1999)



Plo Koon
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



Obi-Wan Kenobi
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



Adi Gallia
Revenge Of The Sith (2005)



**Shaak Ti/
General Grievous**
Revenge Of The Sith
(2005)

Mace Windu
Revenge Of The Sith
(2005)



Finn
The Force Awakens (2015)



Anakin Skywalker
*Attack Of The
Clones* (2002)



Darth Sidious
Revenge Of The Sith
(2005)

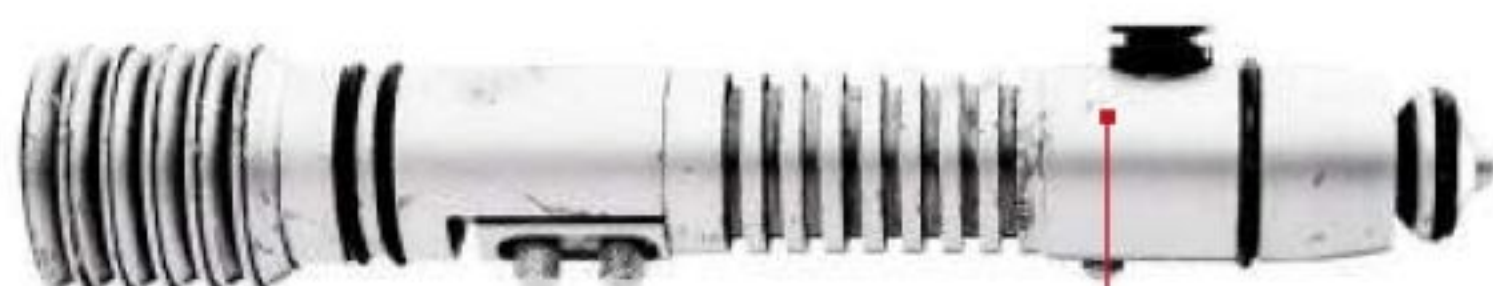
Anakin Skywalker
*Revenge Of The
Sith* (2005)



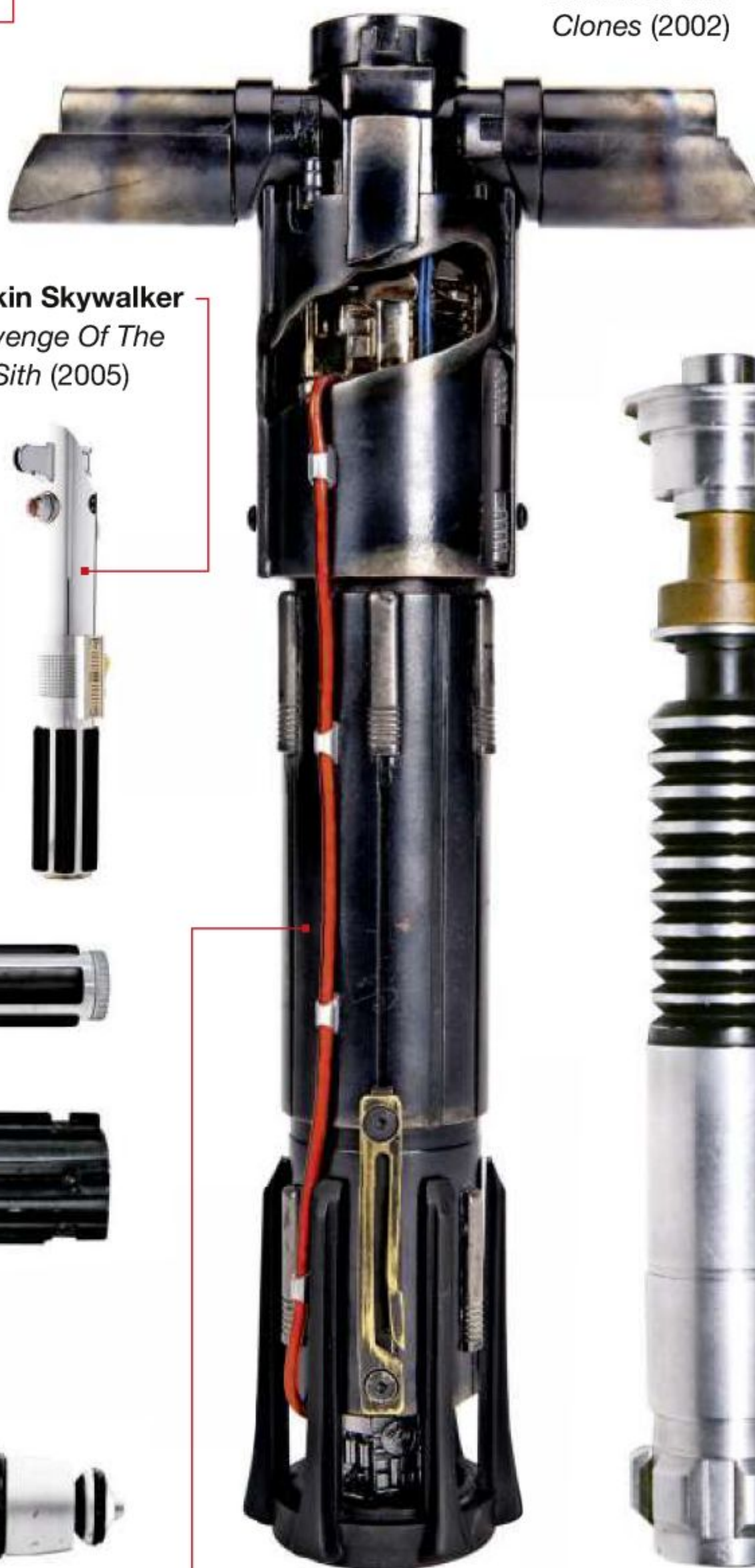
Yoda
*Attack Of The
Clones* (2002)



Luke Skywalker
A New Hope (1977) and *The
Empire Strikes Back* (1981)



Kit Fisto
Revenge Of The Sith
(2005)



Kylo Ren
The Force Awakens
(2015)



Luke Skywalker
Return Of The Jedi
(1983)



Darth Vader
A New Hope (1977),
*The Empire Strikes
Back* (1981), *Return
Of The Jedi* (1983)



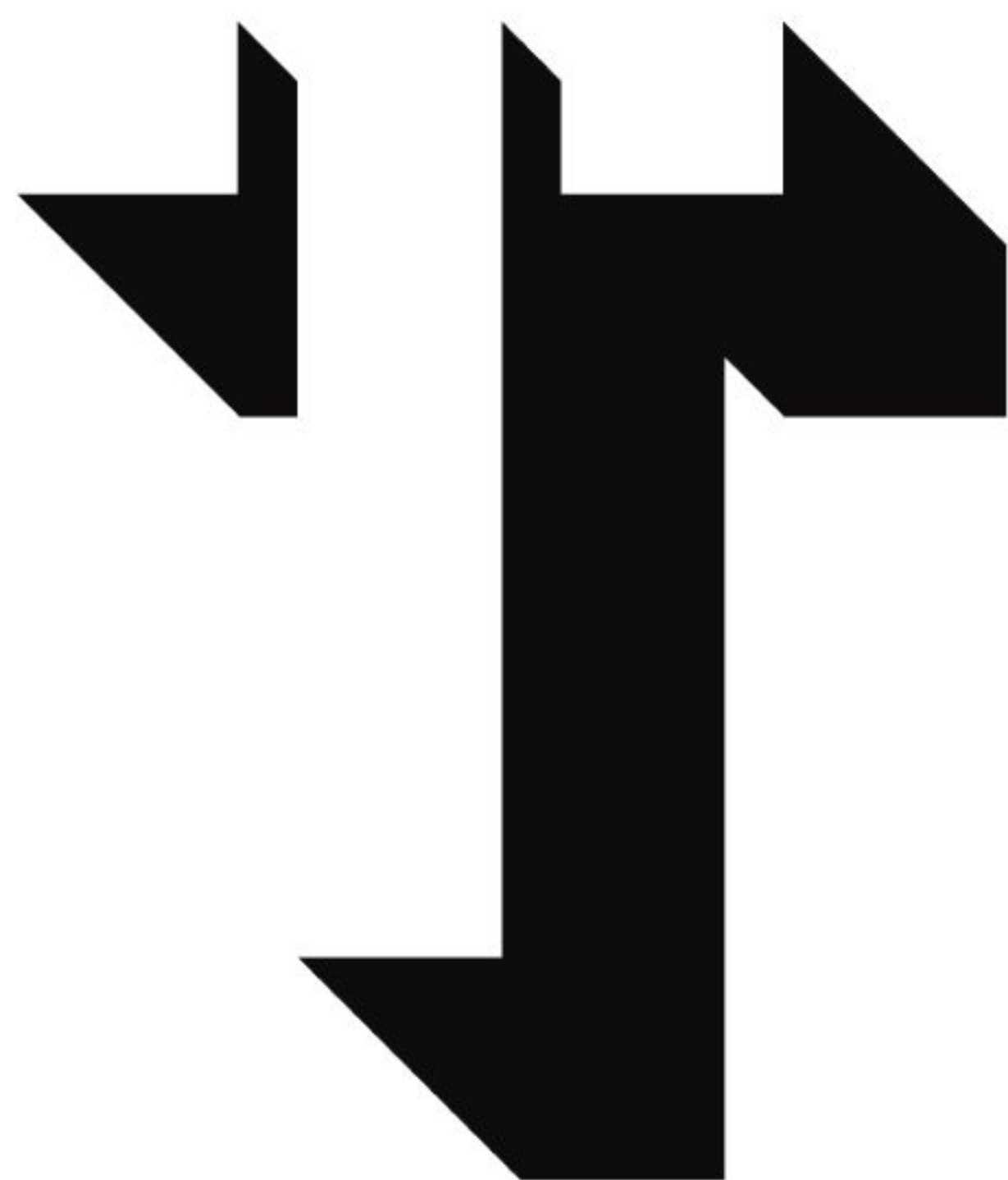


HE'S HERE TO RESCUE US

Mark Hamill

reflects on life with
Luke Skywalker,
and making a
return to the role
he never thought
he'd play again

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT



THE WAY MARK HAMILL REMEMBERS IT, IT WAS DURING a production of *The Elephant Man* ("or maybe *Amadeus*"). It was the early '80s, just after the Empire had struck back, and he was up there on stage, contorting his body in the classic John Merrick style (or composing music), when he noticed something in the audience. Something glowing. Back then, years before mobile phones, audiences simply didn't glow. "Someone was wearing a home-made shirt with all the *Star Wars* stuff on it," he recalls. "It was battery-operated, lit up and very distracting. The usher said to me, 'I've been doing this for 40 years and I never imagined I would have to say, 'Madam, would you mind turning off your blouse?'"

Hamill laughs. It says a lot about his near 40-year relationship with *Star Wars* that this is one of the most trying incidents he can remember. "People say, 'Oh, it must be a drag to be associated with one single thing,' but it's such a positive," he says. "It can be taxing when you're trying to focus on other things and it's the 800lb gorilla in the room... but it's a warm, cuddly gorilla."

In the 32 years since Hamill last donned Luke Skywalker's Jedi robes, he has focused on many other things, be they stage work, his own comic books, or carving out a career as an in-demand voice actor (for many, despite stiff competition, his take on The Joker is definitive). The 800lb gorilla was always there, but as far as he was concerned, it would never again play an active part in his life.

Then, one day in 2012, George Lucas asked him to lunch. "I thought, 'They're re-releasing the movies in 3D, he wants us to do some press,'" says Hamill. "My wife casually said, 'What if he wants to do a new *Star Wars* movie?' And I just laughed at her."

Smash cut: it's several years later, and Hamill has found himself in a Pinewood meeting room, sandwiched between Anthony Daniels and Andy Serkis, ready for the first read-through of a new *Star Wars* movie. Lucas isn't around, but his creation is barreling on. "What we didn't foresee, of course, was George selling the company," muses Hamill. "I tell people all the time that it's completely unexpected, but on the other hand, I think it was inevitable. How could they not make more? It's such a rich source of material, and there's this gigantic canvas to be painted upon."

A FEW WEEKS AGO, WHEN THE FINAL POSTER FOR *THE Force Awakens* was unveiled, it was missing one key element: Luke Skywalker. It's clear J. J. Abrams is holding back the big reveal of Anakin's son, but the exclusion instantly led to a rash of rumours (Luke is evil!) and conspiracy theories (he is on the poster, because he's actually Kylo Ren!). Several British





Clockwise from main:

Hamill with Carrie

Fisher; A light moment

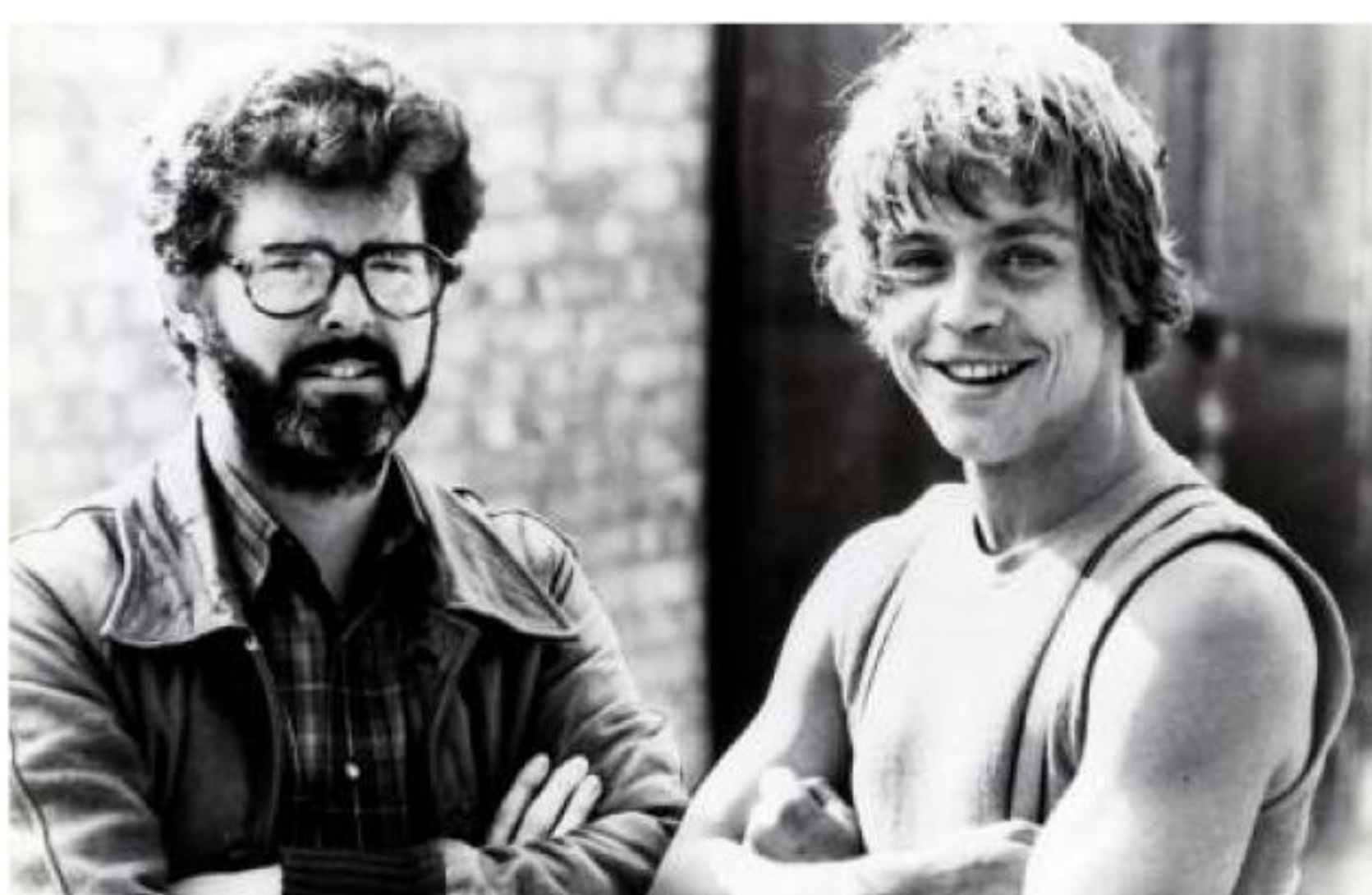
with Alec Guinness;

Flanked by Harrison

Ford and Fisher; In

his snowspeeder;

With George Lucas.



bookmakers offered ludicrous odds on Hamill not even appearing in the movie, ignoring the facts that we see his hand in the trailer, resting on Artoo's gleaming dome, and that he's second billed on the poster's credit block. Rest assured, Luke Skywalker will appear in *The Force Awakens*, although it's a fair bet that he won't quite be the innocent farm boy we met back in *A New Hope*. "Obviously you're seeing him in a very different time in his life," says Hamill. "There are lots of surprises in this movie. You're going to love it."

If scuttlebutt is to be believed, much of *The Force Awakens* will concern the search for the reclusive Luke, and there's a prevailing theory that Hamill spends a large part of the movie by himself. Certainly, Hamill's strongest memory of shooting the movie supports that. "It reminded me of when I was in Tunisia on the salt flats [shooting the first *Star Wars*]. If you could get into your own mind and shut out the crew and look at the horizon, you really felt like you were in a galaxy far, far away. I had that same wave of emotion happen to me when I was on Skellig Michael in Ireland. I wasn't anticipating it."

Expect Luke's seclusion to end at some point, and for the original trio of Luke, Han and Leia to be reunited. Because another thing Hamill says he "could never have anticipated" was working once more with Harrison Ford and Carrie Fisher. Or, as he calls them, "Harry and Carrison. It's an affectionate thing I called them back in the day."

He laughs as he recalls how, on the original movies, he became Fisher's 'dress-up doll'. "She got me to try on her snow outfit, the one-piece," he says. "It wasn't easy. She's much smaller than I am! She tried to talk me into doing all kinds of crazy things and for the most part I would do what she said. There are appalling pictures of me where she puts me in her robes." He pauses. "But I drew the line at the gold bikini."

When *Empire* asks Hamill about key moments from the series — say, Luke discovering that Princess Leia was his sister — he's at once insightful ("From Luke's point of view, it's not just appalling, it's traumatic") and funny ("Good news is there's an attractive woman in the universe; bad news is she's your sister"). At one point in the conversation, he even accidentally calls Darth Vader "Dad Vader". It seems a shame to correct him, so we don't bother.

Throughout our time together, as Hamill prepares to go into Bad Robot's Santa Monica offices to start recording DVD extras for the film, the affection for the 800lb gorilla in his life is palpable. There had been, for a time, a question over Harrison Ford's involvement in *Episode VII*. Not so for Hamill. "I would have been the most hated man on the planet if I'd said no!" he cackles. Then he says something that would be music to Dad Vader's ears. "It's my destiny..." ■

TOYS

The 38-year evolution of the *Star Wars* action figure — the plastic plaything that changed the world

WORDS PAUL WILSON

1977 ▼

Star Wars fans keen to re-enact their new favourite movie in 3 ¾"-high plastic had to be patient. There was a nine-month gap between the movie coming out in May 1977 and the first wave of Kenner toys, which followed in spring 1978. The keenest fans ensured their fix by purchasing a coupon in 1977, good for four figures: Luke, Leia, Artoo and Chewie. Steve Sansweet, formerly of Lucasfilm and now chairman and president of Rancho Obi-Wan, the *Star Wars* merchandise museum, advises that, for collectors, "a sealed kit plus an open kit and send-away box with 'double-telescoping' Luke would be the ideal combination."

Value: £2,000-£3,500

1978 ▲

Kenner's success with *Star Wars* — grossing \$100 million in 1978 — was beyond its, and George Lucas', wildest dreams. These toys are touchstones of *Star Wars* collecting, and the three original lightsaber-wielders — Obi-Wan, Vader, Luke — came with the double-telescoping lightsaber. "You pull it out, like a radio aerial," says Vader toy expert Bill McBride of sithtoys.com. "Kenner cut the design because it was a needless expense at a time when they could barely keep up with demand. There are only about 30 intact examples of Vader like this known in the world. Including prototypes, I have nine of them."

Value: £5,000

1981 ▼

In the year following *The Empire Strikes Back*, new figures kept coming. One of Sansweet's favourite figures — which is saying something, given he has every figure ever made among his Guinness Record-breaking collection of more than a third of a million *Star Wars* items — is the AT-AT Driver. Why? "Although little seen on screen, he had one of the coolest costumes — something that made a character like Boba Fett so popular."

Value: £165



• ALL PRICES ARE CURRENT MARKET VALUE FOR A MINT ITEM IN MINT PACKAGING (OR AS CLOSE TO THAT AS POSSIBLE).



1983 ▲

Return Of The Jedi was the beginning of the end for Kenner *Star Wars* figures. A total of 31 *Jedi* figures were produced, including Admiral Ackbar. "He was a huge hit with fans," says Sansweet. "He was an alien, he was commander of the fleet and he uttered one of the most memorable lines in *Jedi*: 'It's a trap!'" Two years after the film, with sales of figures slowing, the company began to wind down production, and by the end of 1985 stopped altogether.

Value: £35

1987 ▼

The year Tonka bought Kenner also saw the debut of the animated series *Droids*, following in the wake of the two seasons of *Ewoks* cartoons in 1985-1986. It lasted only one season but, says Sansweet, "produced the rarest production action figure of all time: a carded Vlix from Brazil (*licensing deals were not always global, leading to different figures in different countries*). The figure had already gone to the tooling stage before Tonka's Kenner killed the second line of figures from *Ewoks* and *Droids*. The photo here is a beautiful fan-made version. If it were authentic and in this condition, it could easily bring a five-figure sum (*in US dollars*)."

Value: £6,500



1995 ▲

A dozen years after the last movie, and four years after Hasbro bought Tonka and with it Kenner, the Power Of The Force 2 line was introduced. (The first Power Of The Force line was 15 figures released in 1985 on the back of the *Jedi* line.) This was the 'bodybuilder era', when figures were sculpted with a muscular physique — reflecting the design of all toys at the time, a trend kick-started in the early 1990s with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* figures. Not all collectors were happy about that. "I understand why," says Sam Smith, Senior Product Designer at Hasbro. "But I loved my Chewie." Smith was eight years old in 1995; two decades later he is the head of the team making the 3 3/4" classic-size figures for *The Force Awakens*. "It made sense that this Chewie was bulky. He's a giant character, 7'3". Mine was played with so much, he had no paint left on him."

Value: £15

1996 ▼

A disturbance in the Force, so to speak: new *Star Wars* content arrived, including the figures to go with it. "The *Shadows Of The Empire* project was a novel, comic series, toys and a soundtrack — in short, everything except a movie," explains Sansweet. "Sales were moderate, and the best representation of the group might be this action figure of the crime lord Prince Xizor, who almost succeeded in seducing Princess Leia."

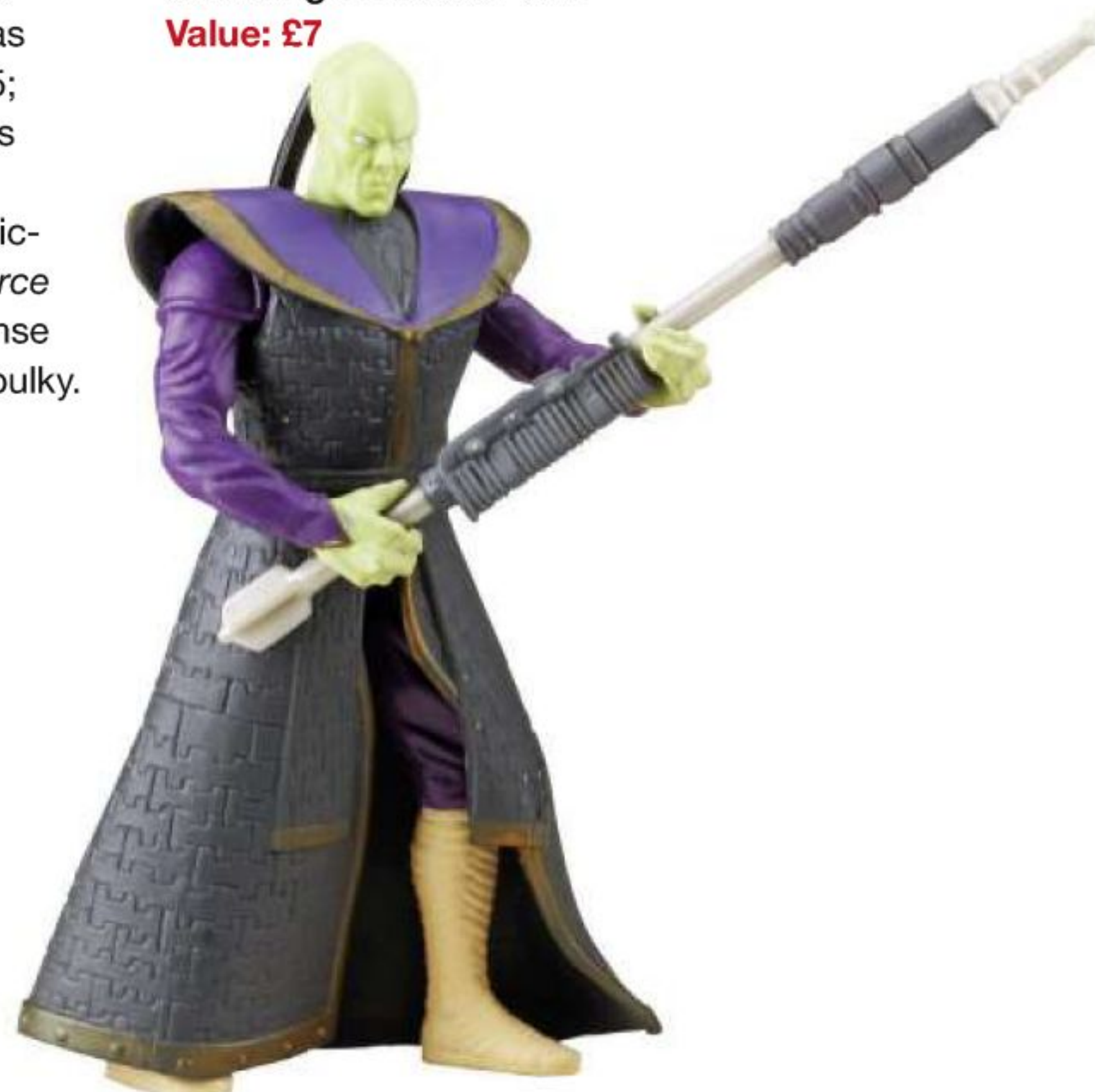
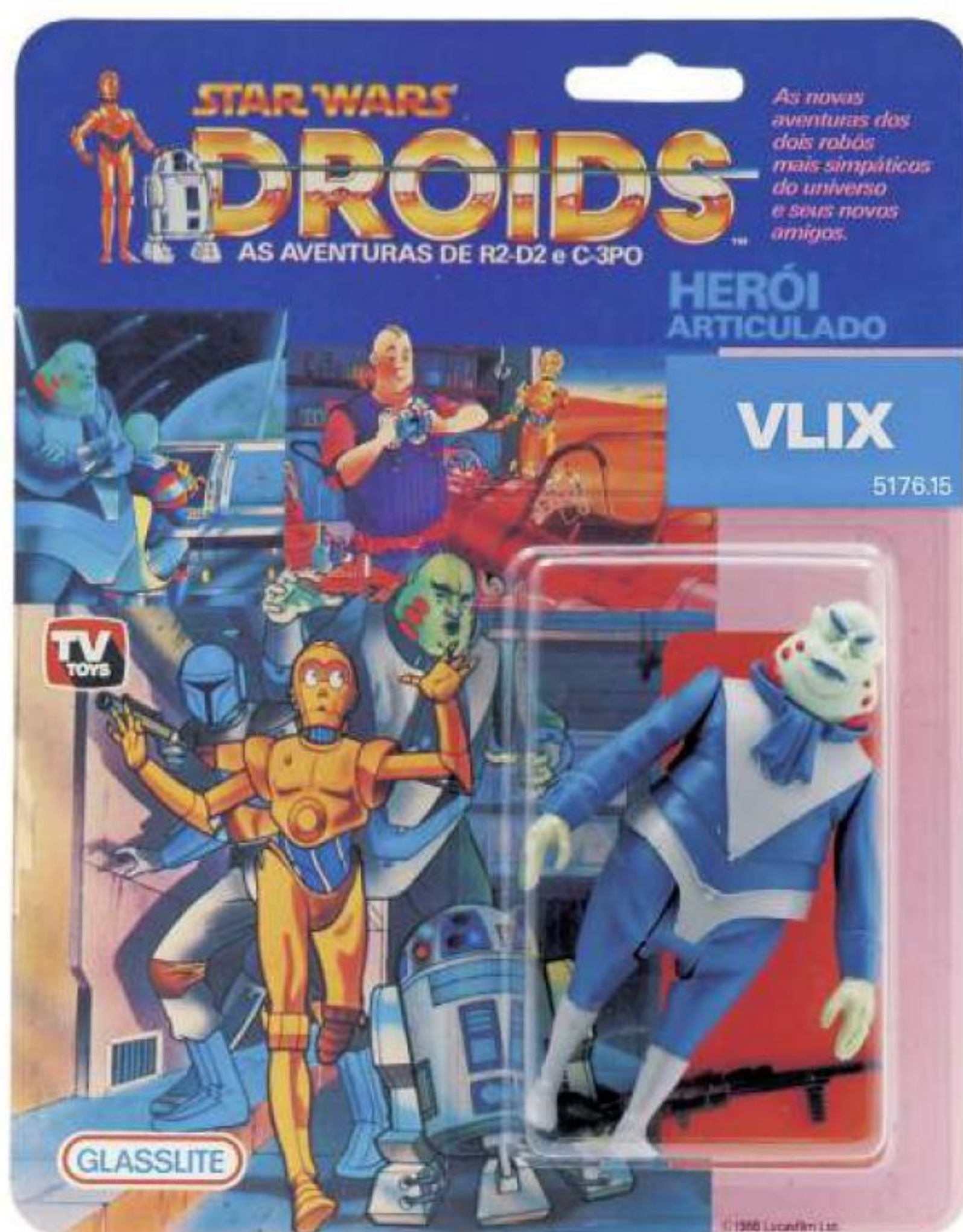
Value: £7



1997 ▲

The Special Editions are released. There are some nice fast-food toy tie-ins — an Artoo that opens to reveal a likkle Leia within — but no special Special Edition toys. The Power Of The Force 2 line marched on.

Value: £3 ▶





1998 ▼

It took 15 years for the most wanted *Star Wars* movie-character moment to be immortalised in action-figure plastic. "The Vader that everyone wanted was from the end of *Jedi* when the helmet came off," says Bill McBride. "But 'removable helmet' Vader didn't appear until just before the new movies came out, as one of the last Power Of The Force 2 figures." (The line ended in 2000.)

Value: £20

1999 ▲

The Phantom Menace is released, accompanied by a then-vast range of merch: Britain's Toys R Us stores had 375 different products on the first day of sale, June 19 (American collectors had a head-start with a May 3 debut). Most sought-after was Darth Maul: advances in toy-making meant even the smallest figures had an accurate representation of the Sith Lord's striking facial colouring. This was also the last year that Hasbro released *Star Wars* toys under the Kenner brand.

Value: £8

2000 ▼

"You can argue that the prequels are really the story of Darth Vader, from a boy on Tatooine to the biggest villain in the galaxy," says McBride. "There was a massive flood of product, with Vaders of all eras, especially to coincide with *Revenge Of The Sith* (in 2005). But, unlike the first trilogy, the figures changed massively between *Menace* and *Clones* and *Sith*. The 'Dagobah' Vader figure, from the scene in *Empire Strikes Back*, is significant because of the level of detail, the scale and proportion." It was part of the Power Of The Jedi line, released from 2000-2002, which had both original and prequel trilogy characters.

Value: £25



2002 ▲

A 23 year-old failed line of toys was rekindled for *Episode II*. "Hasbro brought back 12" scale, large action figures," says Sansweet, "something that Kenner tried with only middling success during the vintage era." The main problem was that people wanted vehicles to go with figures, and such toys would be too complex and expensive to make back then. "In 2002, there were regular single packs such as Mace Windu and Zam Wesell, and then there was a supersized Jango Fett package with more than a dozen accessories."

Value: £15-£35 each





2003 ▼

Between *Attack Of The Clones* and *Revenge Of The Sith* and then again following *Sith* came two animated series based on the galactic conflict. Microseries *Clone Wars* (2003-2005) and regular series *The Clone Wars* (2008-2014) had toy lines in tandem. “Obi-Wan Kenobi is my favourite,” Sansweet says, “and I loved the way he was portrayed in Genndy Tartakovsky’s microseries (below) and the five-and-a-half seasons of the series from George Lucas and Dave Filoni. It was great to get new stories approved by Lucas as well as General Kenobi in a new role.”

Value: £6-£10

2005 ▲

Hello, *Revenge Of The Sith* — which brought with it a toy that sticks in the mind of Hasbro’s Sam Smith. “I have lots of figures from this era,” says the *Episode VII* toymaker, “but I really like ‘Four Lightsaber Attack’ General Grievous.”

Value: £7

2010 ▼

Before Skywalker became one of the most famous surnames in movie history (and perhaps the most famous ranch in the entertainment industry, apart from J.R. Ewing’s Southfork), George Lucas wanted to call his hero Luke Starkiller. About 35 years later, a figure was released that brought the name back. “*The Force Unleashed* video game was released in 2008,” says Sansweet, “and its star-crossed protagonist was Starkiller, aka Galen Marek the Dark Apprentice. The look of this Starkiller from Hasbro was based on the features of the actor who voiced him, Sam Witwer.”

Value: £7



2015 ▲

From 2010 until this year, eight figure lines were launched, including *Shadow Of The Dark Side*, *Legacy Collection*, *Movie Heroes*, *The Vintage Collection* and two kinds of *Saga Legends*. Plus a tie-in with new TV series *Rebels*. “This ‘Old’ Captain Rex figure is a fan favourite,” says Sansweet. “Like many other fans of *The Clone Wars* TV series, I was really excited to see that Captain Rex and some of his cronies had not only survived Order 66 but would be on the side of the Rebels.”

RRP: £9.99

2015 ▼

Sam Smith and his Hasbro team have been working on the *Episode VII* 3 ¾” figures since January 2014. They are all “based on real costumes that are scanned into a digital environment,” he says. “Sometimes we get on-set photography, but I actually prefer not to — because then I can have the same wonderment when we see the characters in the film for the first time. Everyone on the team is so passionate about *Star Wars*. We still have people here who have been involved since the original Kenner days.” Smith’s favourites are Captain Phasma (“It’s been 30 years since we’ve seen a stormtrooper, so a new design that pays homage to the original is awesome”) and Sarco Plank, pictured below (“I always had a huge appreciation for the practical effects in the original trilogy, the obscure aliens only on screen for a moment”).

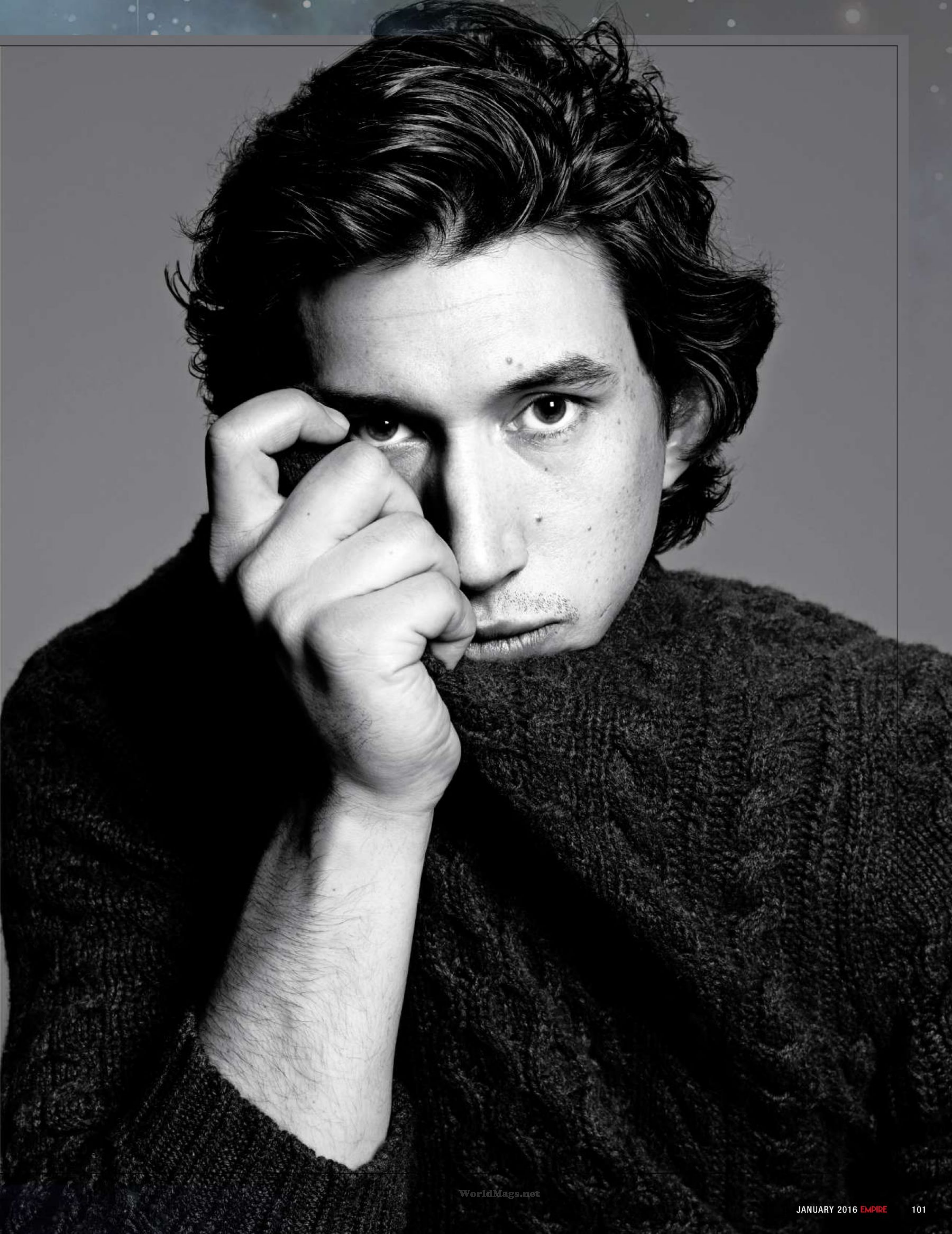
RRP: £9.99

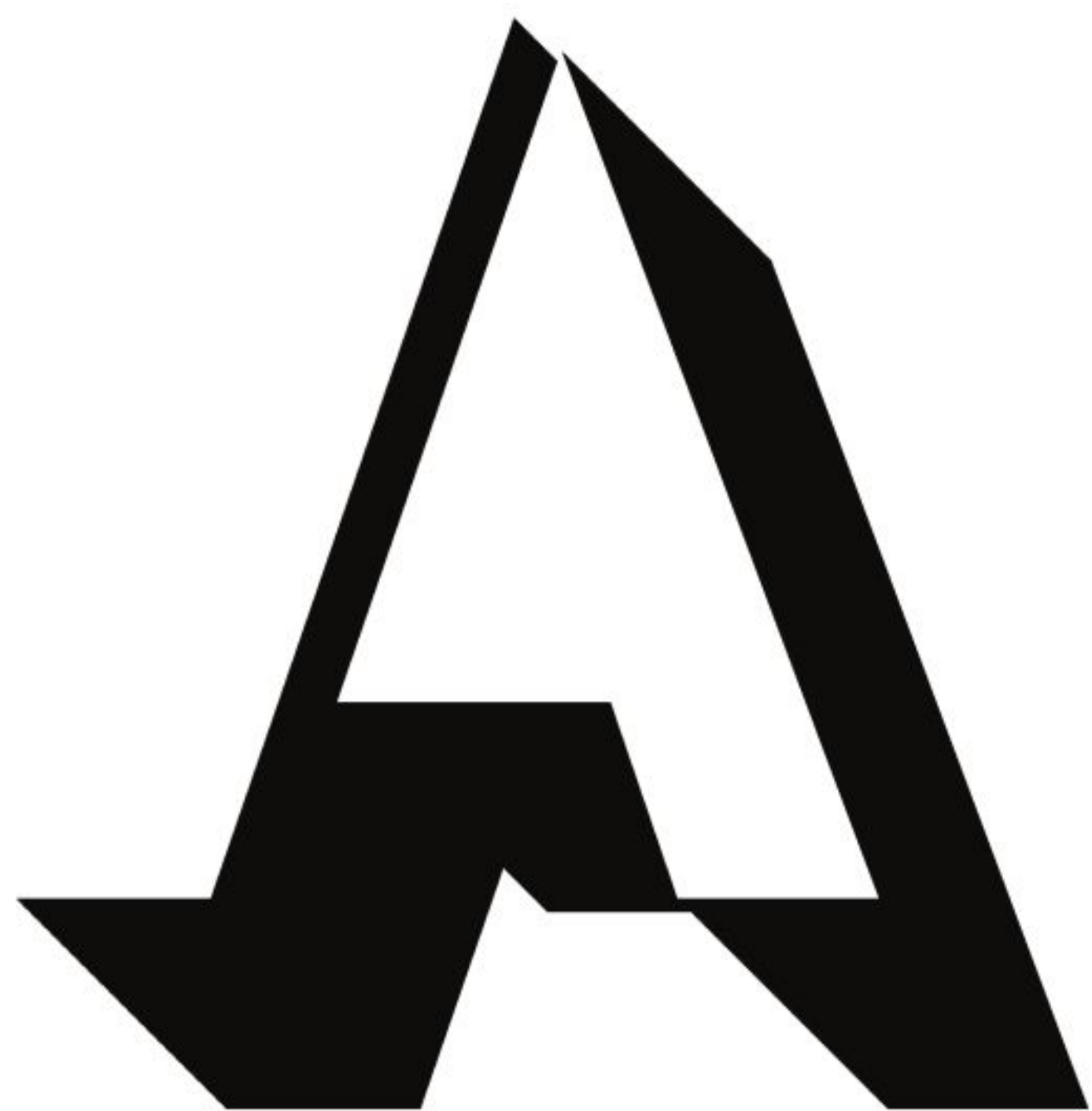


THE DARK HORSE

From *Girls* to *The Force Awakens*...
How **Adam Driver**
became the planet's
most unlikely star

WORDS DORIAN LYNKEY
PORTRAIT PAOLA KUDACKI





ADAM DRIVER MIGHT BE THE ONLY *STAR WARS* FAN IN the world who isn't planning to see *The Force Awakens*. It's not that he doesn't think it will be good, it's just that he doesn't want to see himself in it. The last time he tried was with the Coen brothers' *Inside Llewyn Davis* in 2013. "I was like, 'Oh my God, it's bad,'" he says. "I can't help but see things I wanted to do differently. I was there. That's good enough for me."


So he skipped his two excellent Noah Baumbach movies, *Frances Ha* and *While We're Young*. He didn't even see Spielberg's *Lincoln*, "which is really absurd because it's not called *Samuel Beckwith The Telegraph Operator*. I'm such a small part in it." You name it, Driver's skipped it. Albeit not without a sense of guilt. "I feel like I'm not being supportive of the other people who are in that movie," he says. "It's definitely something I'd like to get over."

So might he make an exception for the most anticipated film of the year? He laughs awkwardly. "I would like to, yeah. I'm still debating it. Eventually I have to watch something."

Two years ago, J. J. Abrams saw Driver in Lena Dunham's HBO show *Girls*, and invited him to Bad Robot HQ in California to discuss the role of Kylo Ren, Darth Vader's dark-side heir. They talked about it for a couple of months, then Driver said he'd think about it. Wait, he had to think about *Star Wars*? "As a fan of the movies you don't want to do a bad job," he reasons. "J. J. said — which is why I was maybe a little apprehensive — 'Just because you can remake something doesn't mean that you should.' I totally agree with him. I feel like a lot of things sacrifice story for the sake of spectacle." He didn't like not being able to read the script until he'd signed up and he was nervous about moving from small, character-driven movies, where he's sometimes asked to bring his own clothes and pack a lunch, to a colossal FX-heavy franchise. "I didn't want to just idly jump into something. I wanted to take it seriously."

The 32-year-old Brooklynite takes everything seriously. He's the kind of powerfully idiosyncratic actor who is destined either to get lots of work or next to none. With his imposing, six-foot-three frame, edgy charisma and oddly anachronistic looks (one *Girls* character said he had the face of an "old-timey criminal"), he's one of a kind. His *While We're Young* co-star Ben Stiller said it felt like acting with Marlon Brando. *Girls* executive producer Jenni Konner compared him to a young De Niro. Driver would have been more at home in the 1970s, among what he calls the "golden generation" of actors who were intense, unpredictable and funny-looking, and came across like they'd lived interesting lives before they got to Hollywood. Driver certainly did.





Driver as Vader
acolyte Kylo Ren.

DRIVER OWES HIS CURRENT CAREER TO AN ACCIDENT that wrecked his previous one. Without the mountain-bike crash that cracked his sternum in 2004, we would probably never have heard of him.

It's not that he wasn't passionate about acting. Growing up in smalltown Indiana, the stepson of a Baptist minister, performing seemed more promising than his other ways of having fun, which, as he's said previously, included climbing radio towers while drunk, setting fire to things and staging his own Fight Club. His confidence was knocked, though, when he was rejected by New York acting school Juilliard and returned from a make-or-break trip to LA after less than a week, having run out of money. He was rudderless and defeated when 9/11 happened and his stepfather suggested he enlist in the military.

When Driver joined the US Marines, he believed that would be his life. He loved the discipline and camaraderie, which he thinks bears some resemblance to movie-making. "It's a group of strangers forced to be intimate in a short amount of time. A group of people trying to accomplish a mission greater than themselves. It's not about you. You have to know your role within a team and there's someone who's leading it and, if you're lucky, they know what they're doing."

The biking accident occurred shortly before he was due to ship out to Iraq, made him medically unfit for service and forced him to consider returning to acting. This time, Juilliard accepted him and he threw himself into the course with the ferocity of someone who felt morally obliged not to muck about. "That was a big takeaway from the Marine Corps, just how precious time is, and I didn't want to waste it," he says. "I couldn't stomach telling my friends who were still in [the Marines] that I was being lazy or not valuing the freedom that I did have. I wanted to pursue acting very aggressively."

DRIVER USED TO WAKE UP BEFORE DAWN, RUN THE five miles to and from Juilliard, and stick to a strict, self-imposed regime of diet and exercise: six eggs for breakfast, a whole chicken for lunch, daily workouts. He admits he may have seemed intimidating to his classmates. "I was a bit aggressive. I had a lot of judgement about civilians. I felt that I had just a little bit more life experience than the 18-, 19 year-old kids in my class. I needed to calm down a bit and they maybe needed to grow up a bit."

After graduating in 2009, Driver's only game plan was to make a living. He did a lot of theatre and landed a few small movie roles before his life was changed by *Girls*. Adam Sackler (the character was named before he auditioned but the coincidence helped) was only conceived for the pilot but Driver so impressed Dunham and Konner that he's still around four seasons later. "*Girls* opened up a lot of opportunities for me," he says. "I've been very, very lucky in the people I've got to work with. It's a luxury to be able to be choosy."

He doesn't want things to be easy. His two years and eight months in the Marines left him with a refusal to complain about even the toughest shoots and a lasting unease about the cushiness of an actor's life. The only thing he says he likes about "trite and pointless" celebrity is the ability to attract publicity and star power to Arts In The Armed Forces, the theatre company he runs with his wife, Joanne Tucker. Attention from strangers is difficult: "I think people sense that I'm more scared of them than they are of me." Even being on set can make him feel guilty.

"It's hard to justify sometimes how you get treated," he sighs. "The idea of someone driving you to work is so

crazy when you think about it. There's a table of food whenever you get hungry. It can make the process of shooting a movie a bit absurd."

DRIVER'S BEEN SPENDING AN AWFUL LOT OF TIME on sets recently. Before joining the *Star Wars* promo juggernaut, he finished work on Jim Jarmusch's *Paterson*. Next year he'll also appear in Jeff Nichols' sci-fi thriller *Midnight Special* as a government agent, and in Martin Scorsese's *Silence* as a Jesuit priest in 17th century Japan. Being offered the part at Scorsese's house was a career highlight: "He's the top of the pyramid." The role required Driver to lose 50lb, a challenge this self-discipline obsessive relished. "Going either way, building your body up or tearing it down, you learn about your body and what it can do." But he's wary of his dramatic weight-loss becoming a story of heroic actorly commitment. It's merely what the movie needed. He enjoyed quizzing Scorsese about making *The King Of Comedy* and seeing how much freedom the director gave his actors. "He encourages you to add your opinion to the mix and that's why he's hired you, which is a weird thing because he's *Scorsese* so your impulse is to be like, 'Just tell me what to do and I'll do it!' But he doesn't want that."

The Force Awakens demanded a different kind of physicality. Driver didn't just need to know his way around a lightsaber; he needed to convey Kylo Ren's personality from behind a black-and-gold helmet. "Playing someone who's masked, your body plays such a role in what you're trying to play. What was so powerful in the original trilogy is that even though [Darth Vader] was behind a mask you could always feel [him] thinking. We had to do mask work in school. Like putting on a parrot mask and trying to embody a parrot." He laughs. "It was a little bit different."

Screenwriter Lawrence Kasdan says, "There's never been a character quite like the one that Adam plays." Most people describe Kylo Ren as the movie's villain but Driver thinks that the really worrying bad guys are the ones who believe they're good. Beware the righteous fanatic. "When they think their actions are morally justified it makes them dangerous and unpredictable. There's no level they won't go to to accomplish what they're after. I never thought of the character as an evil person." He was impressed by how much flexibility he was allowed while performing Ren. "I thought that *Star Wars*, because of all the special effects and moving parts, would have been worked out for me before I got to set. But I was surprised by how much room there was with improv during the action, and how you interpret lines."

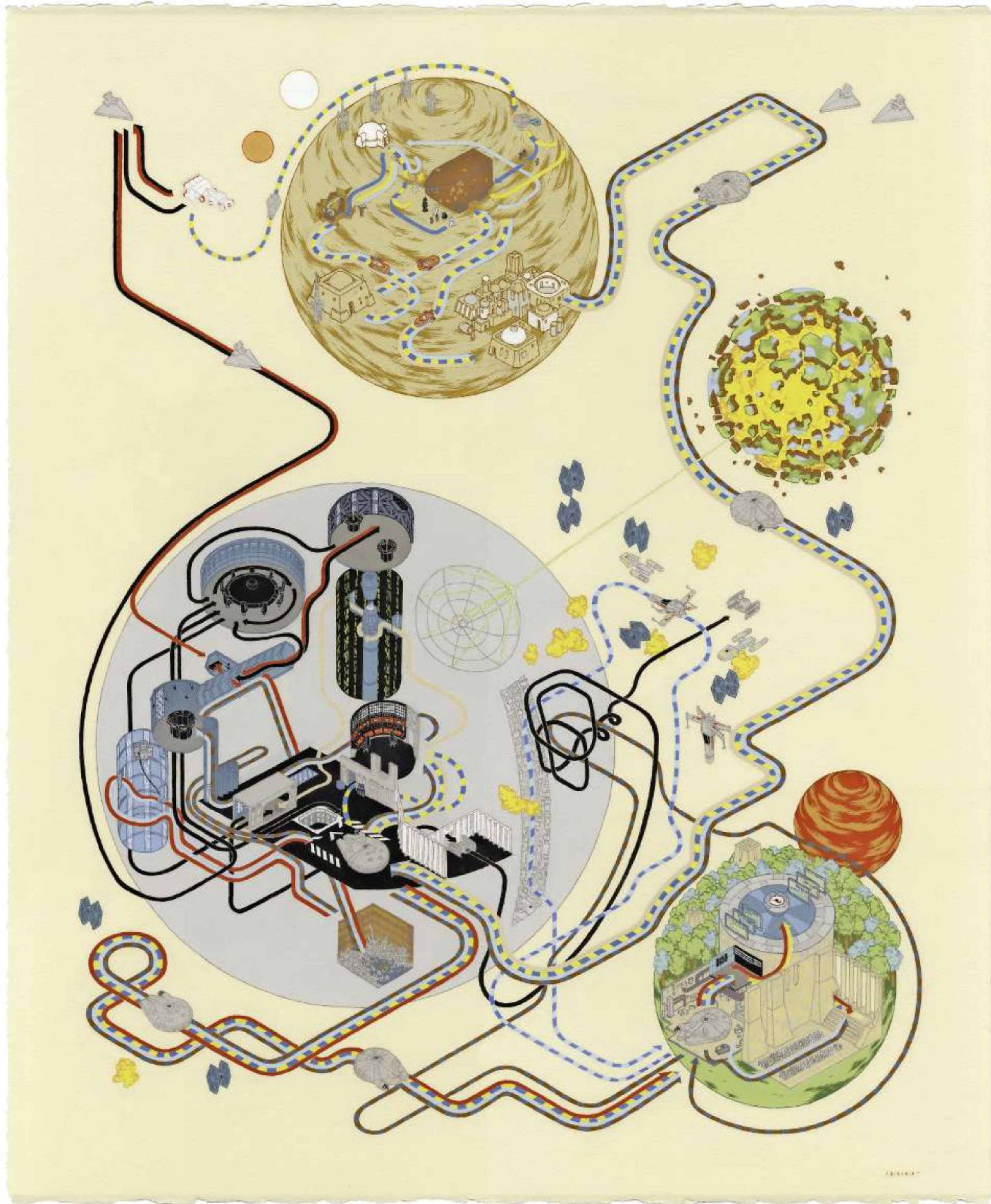
Driver is someone who talks eloquently about the craft of acting only to apologise for sounding "actory". One thing he's learned from working with people like Scorsese, Spielberg and Abrams is that even the greatest talents never think they've nailed it. "The pursuit of trying to getting it right is kind of useless," he says. "You'll never figure it out regardless of what you accomplish so it's best to be open to being wrong as much as possible. There are no right answers to anything, really. The minute you think you're right you're closed off to something that might be more interesting."

Driver sounds like he sometimes drives himself crazy thinking about this stuff, but it's this combination of instinct and intellect that makes him one of the most mesmerising actors of his generation, even when he's wearing a mask and hood. Adam Driver should definitely try to see more Adam Driver movies. He's missing out. ■

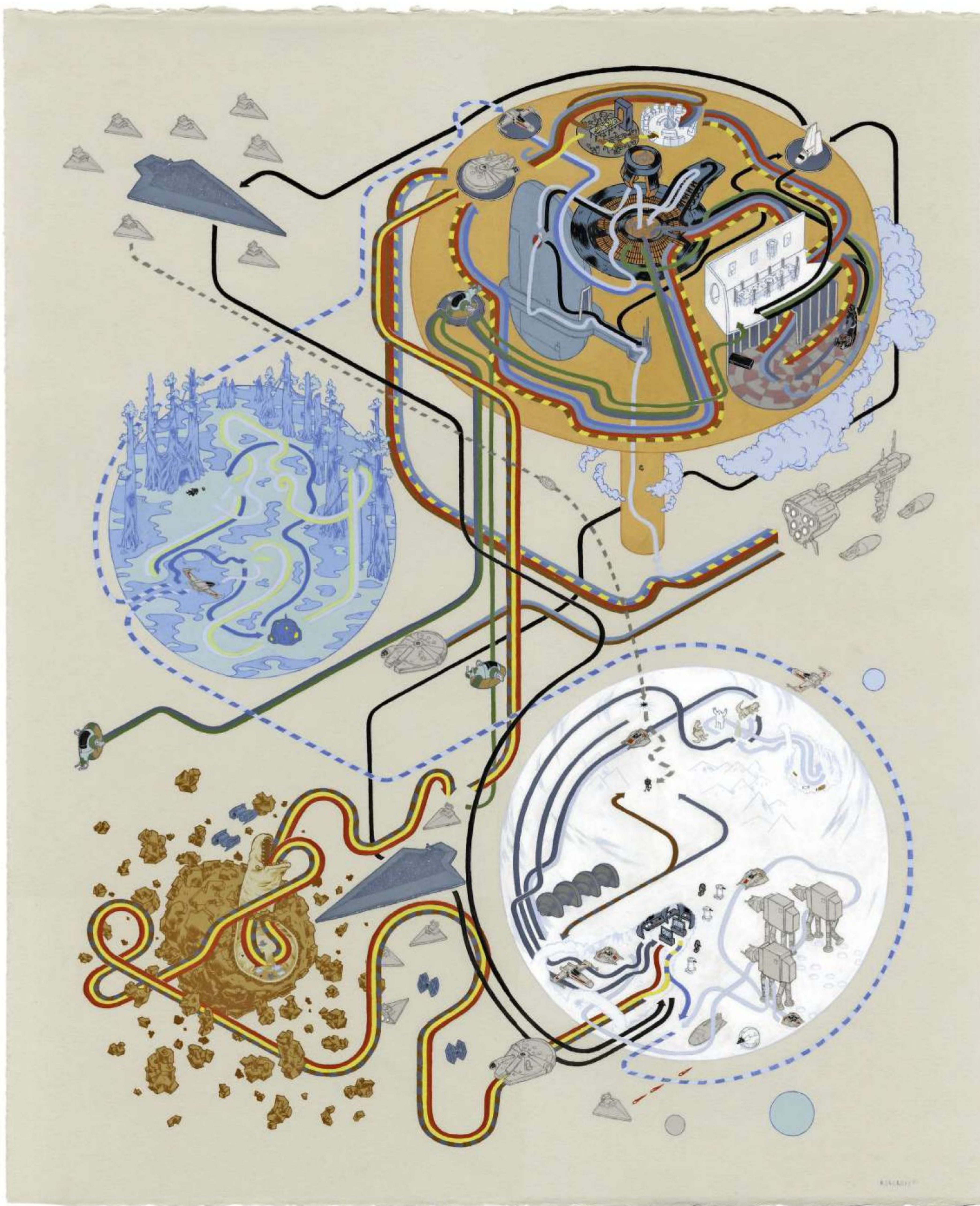
WAR PATHS

Three movies. Three maps. Your favourite trilogy in cool-as-Hoth cartography

ILLUSTRATIONS ANDREW DEGRAFF



EPISODE IV: A NEW HOPE



EPISODE V: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK



EPISODE VI: RETURN OF THE JEDI

MAX FACTOR X



STAR
THE FORCE AWAKENS
WARS™
ONLY IN CINEMAS

FIND THE FORCE WITHIN

THE LIGHT SIDE
Shining eyes
lips for pol
Droid
Star Wars: The



THE DARK SIDE
Dramatic
g soldier.
Look inspired by
Force Awakens.

side? Find your look at w

THE MAKE-UP OF MAKE-UP ARTISTS

Gwendoline Christie,
photographed
exclusively for *Empire*
at the Corinthia
Hotel, London, on
September 25, 2015.

STAR WARS THE FORCE AWAKENS

THE IRON LADY

Best known as
Game Of Thrones'
Brienne of Tarth,
Gwendoline Christie
is set to become
another fan favourite:
Captain Phasma,
the 'Boba Fett' of
The Force Awakens

WORDS JAMES DYER

PORTRAITS STEVE NEAVES

HER

be in *Star Wars*! Please, please, I want to be in *Star Wars*.' I was in New York at the Season 4 premiere of *Game Of Thrones* when I got a call saying I'd got an audition. I had to fly home early for it, just sort of grinning all the way."

Christie's persistence paid off and, as the shelves of shiny figurines at your local Disney store will attest ("I love the Phasma dog-chew toy!"), she has managed to bag the film's coolest-looking character. "Being in that armour meant investigating the character in a different way," says Christie. "The way that she stands becomes very significant, the way she walks is very

She made her movie debut as Classy Shopper 2 in Terry Gilliam's *The Imaginarium Of Doctor Parnassus*, snagging a similarly fleeting role in the director's follow-up, *The Zero Theorem*. "I loved his films when I was growing up," she says. "Meeting him, working with him, that was a dream come true. And he was the sort of person that made me think that, maybe, there might be a space for me in this world."

That space ultimately took the form of towering swordswoman Brienne of Tarth in HBO's *Game Of Thrones*. Arriving at the audition made-up and

EARLY ON IN THE PRODUCTION OF *The Force Awakens*, Star Wars producer Kathleen Kennedy suggested that *Game Of Thrones* star Gwendoline Christie Google "female hero". Together the pair looked at the resulting images. "They were all very conventionally attractive women in body-skimming outfits," recalls Christie. Then Kennedy said, "Don't you think that that's so limited?"

Christie is anything but limited. At 6' 3", she cuts an impressive figure as the First Order's head stormtrooper, Captain Phasma (so dubbed as a nod to cult horror film *Phantasm*'s shiny, homicidal sphere). All mirrored plates and menace, with red-trimmed shoulder cape and nickel-plated blaster, Phasma is a sight to behold.

"A chrome stormtrooper!" cries Christie. "The day I met (costume designer) Michael Kaplan for the first time, he laid out that incredible costume. I slipped into a body suit and then had this armour applied to me. At the end, when they put the helmet on, I looked in the mirror and... the first thing I did was some sassy moves, because you've just got to, right? Then Domhnall Gleeson walks in, looking phenomenal in his uniform. And then J. J. (Abrams) comes in. I felt like I was having some sort of mind implosion. I didn't want to take it off!"

Impeccably polite and blessed with a lusty, infectious laugh, Christie shines with childish delight at the very mention of *Star Wars*. First exposed to *Episode IV* at the age of six ("It was on [TV] one of the first Christmases I remember"), she has loved Lucas' saga ever since.

"As soon as I heard that they were making *Star Wars* again, I was like a dog with a bone. Every part I was offered I'd say, 'That sounds great, but I want to



Top: As the First Order's Captain Phasma in *The Force Awakens*. Above: Armour of a more retro kind as *Game Of Thrones*' Brienne.

significant, the way that she moves a hand gives us a lot of information about the character." *Empire* insists she reminds us of a certain other *Star Wars* villain who's supercool, taciturn and clad in an iconic suit of armour... "She is something of a Boba Fett-style character," Christie admits.

A former gymnast, Sussex-born Christie turned to acting after a spinal injury put paid to a life on the bars.

fully costumed, Christie was, according to *Thrones* creator George R. R. Martin, cast without debate, and established herself as one of the most popular characters on television's most talked-about show. Brienne not only transformed Christie's career but also helped highlight an issue that she has long struggled with, regarding physicality and the way women are depicted on screen. To be embraced as an unconventional heroine, one who is neither conventionally attractive nor sexualised in any way is, to her, both heartening and progressive; a sliver of hope that attitudes to women in film and television are shifting.

"It's a great honour for me to play a part like Captain Phasma," she says, "because I think it is changing things. It's exciting for me being the first [major] female villain in *Star Wars*, but also a villain where we're all excited about who she is and what she's going to do, rather than just her flesh." ■



A LONG TIME AGO, JUST NOW

BY SIMON PEGG

Star Wars has been a significant part of my life since 1978. Over the years, my relationship with it has grown, evolved and developed in ways I could never have anticipated. Least of all, that I am now a cast member and sounding board for J.J. Abrams on the new instalment of the saga



IN MAY 25, 1977, SOME TEN MONTHS before I would eventually see it myself, *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*, then simply *Star Wars*, was released in just 42 theatres across the US. Exactly 37 years later, the day before I'm due on the set of *Star Wars: Episode VII – The Force Awakens*, then simply *Episode VII*, I scare the bejesus out of J. J. Abrams by screeching dramatically at the fact that his suite, at the Abu Dhabi hotel complex we are staying in, is number 37.

My first intimation of this epoch-defining space opera was through merchandise. Two days before my eighth birthday, I visited a friend and had my first encounter with Luke, Leia, Han et al, in the form of a sheet of rub-on transfers by Letraset, which featured two dioramas depicting the Death Star interior and the surface of Tatooine. The transfers presented a variety of odd-looking characters, including a boy in pyjamas, a dog-faced man in black, a number of similar-looking men in white and a bearded man in a cloak, whose sword appeared to be on fire. There was something utterly beguiling about these enigmatic figures. I was intrigued by their appearance, desperate to know their story. A few weeks later, my questions would be answered and my life would change forever. At the Star Wars Celebration at London's ExCeL in 2007, I bought two sets of the same transfers, at auction for a very reasonable price, and completed one of many *Star Wars* circles that have occurred throughout my life.

I went with my mother and stepfather to the ABC Cinema in Gloucester to see the film everyone was talking about. *Star Wars* had been all over the news for breaking box-office records. The TV showed lines of excited people outside Grauman's Chinese Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard, underscored by the tinkling theme of John Craven's *Newsround*, and my appetite for this enigmatic spectacle had been further whetted. Nick Frost and myself attend the premiere of our movie, *Paul*, a film replete with *Star Wars* references, at Grauman's Chinese Theatre. I am unsure what was more exciting, our film premiere or the location.

I strangely don't remember watching *Star Wars* as clearly as emerging into the night afterwards, clutching the poster I'd bought from the foyer in a daze of elation. The poster, depicting Chewbacca, arms protectively outstretched around Princess Leia, who is clinging to his fur, and Luke Skywalker and Han Solo pointing their blasters at some unseen foe, was rolled into a tube and handed to me to carry to the car. Walking up The Oxbode in Gloucester town centre, I brandished the tube as if it were a blaster and made the first of countless "pew-pew" noises I would intone throughout my childhood and into adult life.

And now I am standing on the set of the Millennium Falcon (the entrance corridor with the smuggling compartments), holding Chewbacca's bowcaster, quietly "pew-pewing" to myself, waiting for Han and Chewie to arrive on set and make that entrance. I've been on a number of film sets over the years, witnessed a number of cool moments, but I have never seen so many people gathered around the monitors as on that day.

There are several monitor stations around the set, broadcasting the video feed from A, B and C cameras. There's video village, where the producers, writers, guests and, most importantly, the script supervisor sits; the sound department, VFX department and a few other miscellaneous feeds for various departmental needs. Each is crowded with crew who have stopped to view this momentous occasion. A number of them are the offspring of original *Star Wars* crew members. The whole thing has a palpable sense of film history being made, a sense that would have been completely absent 39 years earlier, as George Lucas struggled to make the original film, little knowing how significant it would be, not just in terms of its effect on the cinematic landscape but on the concept of film merchandising.

I bought my first *Star Wars* figure from the toy department of Debenhams, Gloucester. It was R2-D2, a delicate recreation of the lovable astromech droid, the head of which revolved, making little pinging sounds. Now I'm taking a photo of my five year-old daughter with her arm around the real thing. Later, she's kneeling by new droid on the block BB-8, as the brilliant team who operate him activate his remote and puppeteer him from around a corner. She is completely beguiled, patting his domed head and talking to him as he nods and wobbles like a puppy. Knowing the next stop is M Stage and the Millennium Falcon interior, I encourage her to let BB-8 go back to work, to which she says, "Just one more hug, dad." In this moment I know this new addition to the *Star Wars* universe is going to be a phenomenon just as Artoo was 37 years earlier, inspiring me to make him my first purchase and the best 99p I ever spent.

Eventually, I pry her away and head for the Falcon. We wander around the familiar corridors; sit at the chess table. She climbs into Han and Chewie's bunks respectively. Eventually we get to the cockpit — dad gets Han's seat, daughter gets Chewie's. Just two years older than my daughter I had pinned another *Star Wars* poster to my bedroom wall. Han, Ben, Luke and Chewie, sitting in that same cockpit, looking out with concerned expressions, most likely at the size of that moon.

Back then, my collection of *Star Wars* merchandise grew steadily. The Christmas of 1978 was easy for my parents. My mother has a photo of me surrounded by freshly opened gifts, including a *Star Wars* pillow case, book and Princess Leia action figure (I'm also wearing football things, but I grew out of that). Now I'm strolling around the Resistance base at Pinewood Studios, arm in arm with Carrie Fisher, a woman whose image I used to kiss before bed, talking about how strange it must be being back in the universe. She shrugs it off, but I know she's

"The whole thing has a palpable sense of film history being made."

playing it down because she's tough and cool and funny as fuck. I give her a hug and unabashedly tell her that I love her. She grabs my hand, regarding my wedding ring and shoves me off with a profanity. She is as special to me now as she was then. I smile a lot that day. Almost as much as I do the following day as she and I discuss *Star Wars*-related porn in the make-up trailer.

Meeting the other cast members is a similarly emotional experience, whether it's watching playback with Harrison Ford (seeing Han Solo put on his Indiana Jones-style glasses only makes him cooler), chatting with Anthony Daniels or Peter Mayhew (both delightful), or unabashedly hugging Mark Hamill like we are old friends. In some ways, at least for me, we are.

I am on set as a consultant, acting as a sounding board for J. J., who is making tweaks to the already wonderful screenplay. My computer is open in Final Draft and, at the top of my screen, the scene heading reads, "INT. S-REDACTED-R — DAY". I hear a familiar voice and turn to see Mark walking onto set, looking trim and cool, with a beard that he grumbles about but makes him look handsome and Jedi-like. When they shot Luke placing his robotic hand on R2's head, a moment glimpsed in the trailer, I sat at the monitors with Mark's family and marvelled at the huge significance of the moment. Back in the playground of Castle Hill Primary School, we decided who would be who in



Above: Pegg on Christmas Day 1978, aged eight, surrounded by *Star Wars* gifts.
Below: Hugging the walking carpet on set.

our break-time game of *Star Wars*. I turned around, touched the ground and, "Bagsie be Luke!" I always did back then. There are many who would argue Han to be cooler, but I was blond and lived in a place that felt far from the bright centre of the universe. It only felt right; I wanted to be a star pilot and it was all such a long way from where I was. Luke was my hero, still is.

In 1981, I received a gatefold double album of John Williams' score to *The Empire Strikes Back*, which is still my all-time favourite film score. I would sit in my grandmother's front room for hours listening to it and imagining myself in my own *Star Wars* movie as Luke's younger brother — an eight year-old boy, tagging along behind his older Jedi brother. At that time, a *Star Wars* film with a small child in a main role seemed perfectly reasonable to me. I was young, what did I know?

Now, I'm sat on a comfy sofa on the scoring stage at Sony Studios in Culver City, California, listening to John Williams score *The Force Awakens*, his peerless musical cues lovingly applied to the images on the screen. It sounds like *Star Wars*: the new stuff sounds like it should; the old stuff brings the hairs on the back of my neck to attention. As Han and Leia's theme plays, producer Bryan Burk FaceTimes Lawrence Kasdan so he can hear it. I smile and wave at the man who wrote *The Empire Strikes Back*, as well as this newest instalment of a story that has been a huge part of my life for almost 40 years. Through good times and bad, as a fan, a student, a detractor and collaborator, *Star Wars* is without doubt the defining film in my life.

Six months ago, I logged on to eBay and found the same gatefold edition of John Williams' *Empire* score I owned as a child (still do) and gifted it to J. J. Abrams for his birthday. Not just as a birthday present, but as a thank you for literally making my childhood dreams come true. After a period of time when I thought *Star Wars* was a mere memory, buried in an avalanche of disappointment and diminishing returns, I found myself contributing to the very story that had inspired me so much as a child. As an actor, as a writer, as a reborn fan. There are so many more circles I could cite, but there are more interesting things to read in this month's *Empire* concerning this particular milestone in cinema history, so I'll leave it here.

Thirty-seven years ago, I walk into the ABC Cinema Gloucester, unaware that I am taking my first step into a larger world. The Force, it would seem, is with me. ■





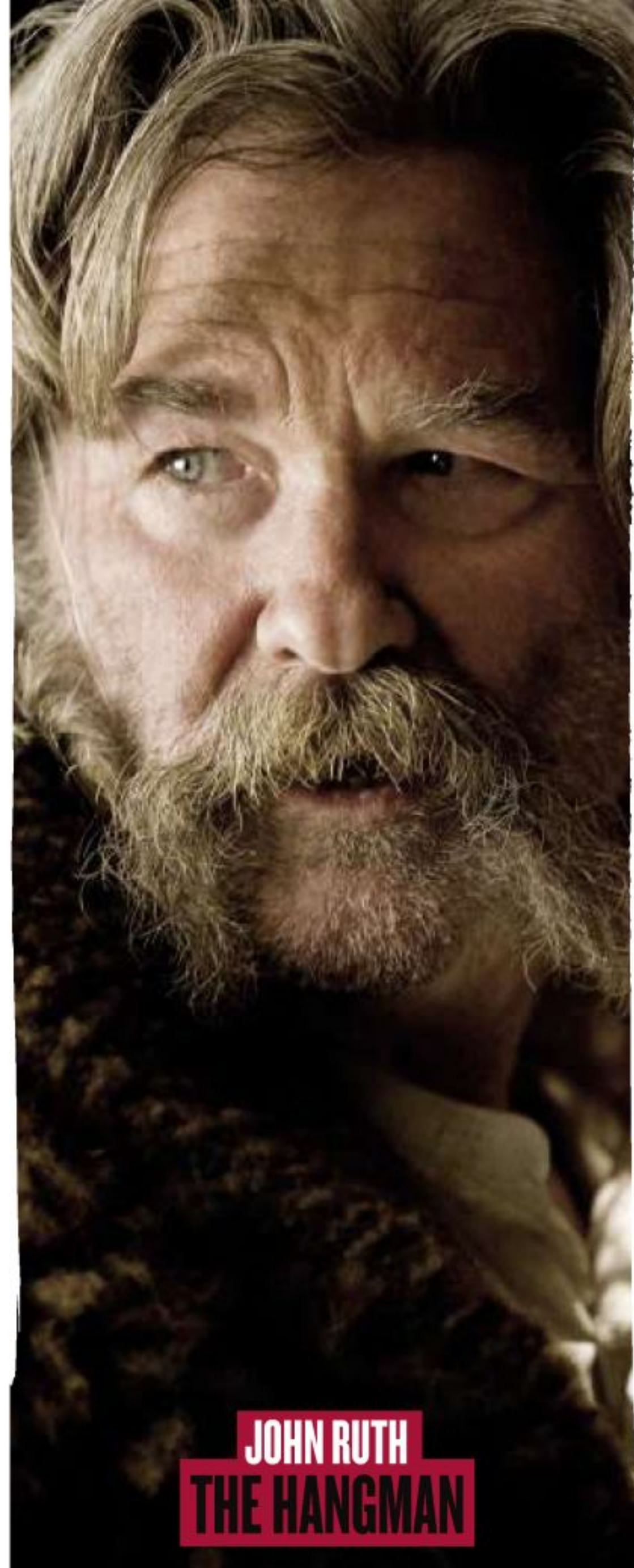
QT ON THE W E S T E R N F R O N T

Empire ventures to the wild set of Quentin Tarantino's 'mystery-thriller Western' *The Hateful Eight*... And spends four days waiting for an audience with the man himself

WORDS DAMON WISE



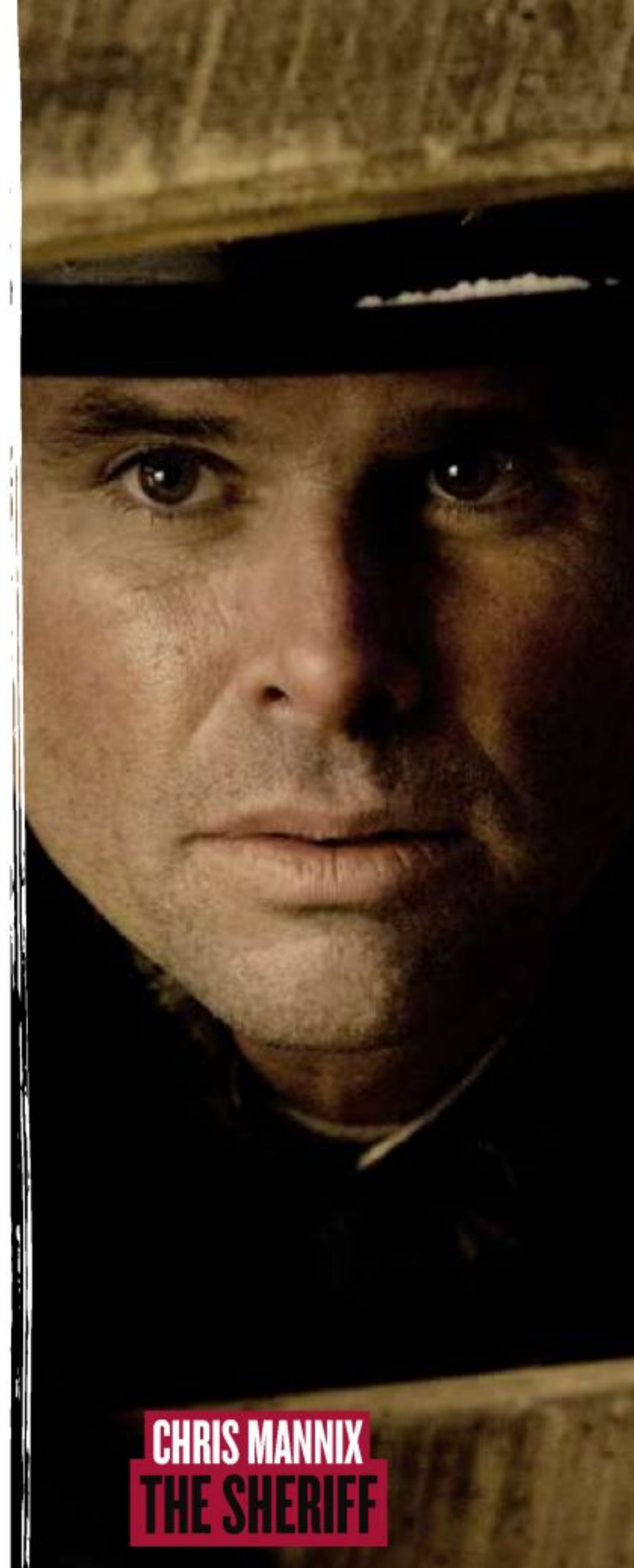
MAJOR MARQUIS WARREN
THE BOUNTY HUNTER



JOHN RUTH
THE HANGMAN



DAISY DOMERGUE
THE PRISONER



CHRIS MANNIX
THE SHERIFF

Day One

LAST STAGE TO TELLURIDE

Blood and snow: these are the only two things you can be sure of in Quentin Tarantino's eighth movie — a film he announced quietly, after months of speculation, with an ad in these very pages. It featured the striking image of a six-horse stagecoach leaving a splash of crimson on a stark, white background. Tarantino has filmed in snow before, in *Kill Bill* and *Django Unchained*, but for *The Hateful Eight* he wants to conjure up a seething winter's hell, a genuine, raging, terrifying no-VFX blizzard.

But on a bright February afternoon when *Empire* arrives at Canyonlands Field Airport, Utah, a three-hour drive from the film's shoot in Telluride, Colorado, the weather is troublingly beautiful. As the dazzling sandstone arches of Moab become the stately mountains of Colorado, there is snow on the ground but none in the air. So little is happening that Samuel L. Jackson, one of the Eight, has been given the week off to promote his new movie, *Kingsman: The Secret Service*. Indeed, the situation will later become so desperate that the cast and crew attempt a pagan sacrifice, throwing wooden skis onto a bonfire in prayer to Ullr, the Norse god of skiers. But for now, while Tarantino and his crew sit on standby for the first flake of snow, *Empire* is taken to a ski lodge in the town of 2,000 and simply asked to wait. And as the production waits on snowfall, so we will wait to speak to the director.

In the meantime, things get interesting. We're handed a script with the title page torn off in a familiar hand-scrrawl that reads "Chapter One: Last Stage To Red Rock". We are sworn to secrecy. This isn't the script Tarantino nearly abandoned in January 2014 after gossip website *Gawker* leaked it, or the version used at Tarantino's live on-stage reading in Los Angeles the following April. This is the new version, the one Tarantino dangled in front of potential buyers at this year's American Film Market. "There are five chapters," explains producer Stacey Sher. "For a certain period of time, people could only read chapters one through four, then people on the crew slowly got chapter five — but it didn't have the ending of the movie."

The reason for all this secrecy is that *The Hateful Eight* is the director's first mystery-thriller. It starts with bounty hunter John Ruth (Kurt Russell) bringing in criminal Daisy Domergue (Jennifer Jason Leigh) to stand trial in Red Rock. Along the way he meets two strangers, Major Marquis Warren (Jackson) and Chris Mannix (Walton Goggins), who claims to be a sheriff. These four make up half of the titular gang, who will assemble at the supposedly snowbound Minnie's Haberdashery, where things heat up.

It's unusual for Tarantino to be this cagey with his scripts. This one, though, went out into the world before he was through with it. "Quentin's never been a person who's shy about sharing his work," says Sher. "But what he *didn't* want to share was a work in progress,

and every artist deserves the right to guard their creative process. So it felt like a violation to him."

Empire hands back the manuscript and returns to waiting. Luckily, Telluride is surprisingly full of distractions: besides the skiing and fine dining, there are four 'hippy paraphernalia' shops where marijuana is legally available in many forms. Their gummy bears have been selling well lately.

Day Two

SIX-HORSE JUDY

The Steaming Bean on the main drag is a coffee house that sounds so much like a Quentin Tarantino joint that it comes as no surprise to find him in there, wrapping up a chat with one of his heads of department. It becomes swiftly evident he is about to leave. "Come over and see the dailies," he offers, heading for the door. And with that, he's gone.

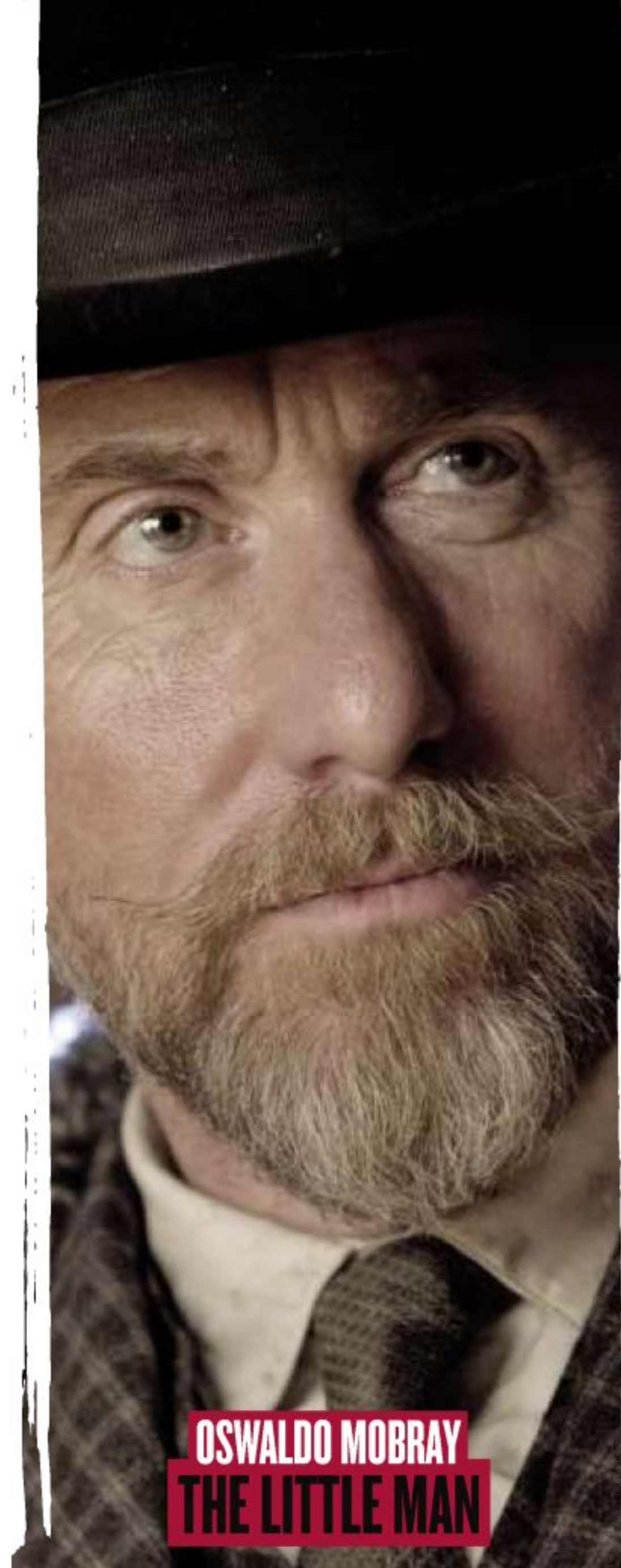
Sitting nearby, mercifully, is Zoë Bell. She's more used to punching, roundhouse kicking and neck-snapping than twiddling her impressive thumbs, but Tarantino's longtime stuntwoman and *Death Proof* star is actually enjoying her downtime.

The Hateful Eight is Bell's fifth movie with Tarantino and the third in which she plays a character rather than a stunt double. "I don't carry a single gun in this one," she notes. Not one of the titular Eight, Bell is Six-Horse Judy, so named because she drives a six-horse carriage.

"I got the script the day it got leaked," she remembers, being one of the few to



BOB
THE MEXICAN



OSWALDO MOBRAY
THE LITTLE MAN



JOE GAGE
THE COW PUNCHER



GENERAL SANDY SMITHERS
THE CONFEDERATE

receive it directly from Tarantino, “so then it looked like it wasn’t going to happen. But it was kind of a cool progression, because then he went on to the idea of doing the staged cast read-through.” She remembers the live reading that the director put on at LA’s Ace Hotel in April of last year using a version of his second draft, which has since undergone major changes. “I was in a room with Sam, Kurt and Bruce Dern and all these people, going through the script, watching Quentin workshop with these legends. I was super-comfortable with the script before I ever realised we were going to make a movie out of it.”

A month or so later, Tarantino called. As he told a press conference in Cannes, the knife-in-the-back wound had “started to scab” and the project was back on, using practically the same team she’d read with. Deftly sketched in the script as “a young female Calamity Jane type, dressed in buckskin”, Judy is one of the few characters without a hidden agenda. “Six-Horse Judy’s obviously tough,” she says. “But the way he described her, I knew exactly who she was. I knew which part of *me* he was referring to: the childish, bouncy part. She’s certainly not the comic relief, but she’s definitely a bit of mood relief.”

Over the road at the 150-seat Masons Hall cinema, above the hardware store, producer Shannon McIntosh has installed a 70mm projector. The kit is enormous, with huge cans of film piled in the hallway, and the venue is surprisingly full. McIntosh and fellow producers

Sher and Coco Francini take the back row; Michael Madsen, who plays redneck cowpuncher Joe Gage (one of the Eight), has brought his son; and Tarantino sits with his DP, Robert Richardson. Everyone here is, by now, used to the sight of the director laughing wildly at his own dialogue, as if hearing it for the first time.

The images on the screen are positively luminous, with a warm, golden glow. This is Ultra Panavision 70 (“The original IMAX,” notes Francini), and though you might expect such a format to be used primarily for mountain ranges, ravines and rattlesnakes, it makes for truly striking close-ups and reaction shots. The footage we’re watching comes from the early hours of the intrigue. In one scene, Tim Roth’s Oswald Mobray delivers a crisp, eloquently witty speech about the “thirst-quenching” properties of frontier justice. Tarantino roars with laughter. “Do you like the way Tim’s channelling James Robertson Justice?” he enthuses in *Empire*’s general direction.

Day Three

THE COWBOY AND THE MEXICAN

Michael Madsen has made three films with Tarantino, four if you include biker flick *Hell Ride* — which he does. The actor is an imposing figure in a cowboy shirt and Stetson, his eyes obscured by Ray-Bans. But underneath the tough-guy exterior, Madsen is a pussycat; he has a warm smile and soft, chubby skin that gives us a hint of what the middle-aged Mickey Rourke could have looked like. His

hotel, the Madeline, is up in Mountain Village, 10,000 feet above sea level, and the bar where we meet has spectacular views.

“I just wanna say one thing,” he begins, *à propos* of nothing. “When Budd pulls his sword out in *Kill Bill*, on Budd’s sword it says, ‘To my brother Budd, the only man I ever loved — Bill.’ And I’d like to start by saying I have that sword. And there should be one from me to Quentin. Let’s face it: I wouldn’t have had a career if it weren’t for him. I’d have been dead and buried a long time ago if it weren’t for Quentin. My life would have taken a bad turn. He’s a fuckin’ genius, man.”

Madsen’s Joe Gage is a strong, silent cowboy type who claims he’s on his way to spend Christmas with his mother. “When I first read it, I wanted to be John Ruth (*the Kurt Russell character*),” he admits. “I remember thinking, ‘Hey, Quentin, I’m John Ruth, man. Who’s this Joe Gage? I don’t wanna be the cowboy fella, man!’ But then I realised Joe Gage is probably the best role in the film.” Madsen, you see, is a huge fan of Steve McQueen, and he saw that this was just the kind of role McQueen would have played. “Steve, he didn’t like to do explanation. He’s just gonna be the guy that sits there, and you think, ‘What the fuck is going on in that guy’s mind?’ I’m much better that way. I don’t wanna have a lot to say.”

Taking the gondola 1,790 breathtaking feet back down to Oak Street Plaza, a stiff drink is required. So we head to the Esperanza restaurant on the main drag, where Demián Bichir orders a drink in his native tongue and the barman is



impressed. "Good Spanish, sir!" he nods. Bichir is somewhat taken aback. "Aw, yeah," he deadpans. "Er, that's my thing."

The Mexican actor came to the production recommended by Robert Rodriguez, who directed him in *Machete Kills*. Surprisingly, he claims never to have been a big fan of Westerns before this. "But Quentin introduced us to this world, or at least he introduced me. He sent me a few DVDs and I kept watching them and discovering more. *Stagecoach*, *High Noon*, *Red River*... I got hooked."

He sees *The Hateful Eight* as a very human drama, despite its genre dressing. "The fascinating thing about this story," he says, "is that these guys are exactly the way we human beings are. We have our fantastic sides and our terrible sides — this duality. We cannot only be good or bad but interesting and funny. That's the way life is... The devil is always disguised as a really charming person."

Bichir's character is Mexican caretaker Bob, but it is impossible to discuss Bob's role without getting into major spoiler territory. "I hope you don't get this the wrong way," he says, "but I have a hard time trying to explain or talk about my character. But..." He grins. "Bob is one of those eight motherfuckers."

Day Four, Volume One:

SEVEN CONVENE AT MINNIE'S

The Schmid Family Ranch is a Centennial Farm — a property continuously owned by a single family for 100 years or more — on Wilson Mesa, ten miles west of Telluride. Ordinarily it is beautiful, but the sight that greets us is authentically grim. Snow that has fallen in recent weeks is melting, turning the hillside into a morass of sludge and mud that brings to mind Robert Altman's *McCabe & Mrs. Miller*. Like the envisioned elements, Tarantino remains elusive. So, after calling in at the costume truck to borrow a set of ice grips, we are directed to Walton Goggins' trailer.

The part of Mannix makes up for the actor's bittersweet experience on *Django Unchained*, in which his role, as Billy Crash, shrank in the final cut. "My collaboration with Quentin may not have been fully realised for the audience to see," he says generously, "but it didn't take away from my personal collaboration with the man. *Django* really changed my life as an artist, and that collaboration led to this opportunity."

The Hateful Eight, he thinks, picks up where *Django* left off, in a sense. "Quentin always says something with his material that is often masked by humour and these visually stimulating shots. But I think he's

saying something important with this film. For me, it's a war crimes tribunal. Every participant, with the exception of one, is guilty of one atrocity or another. And we're all judge, jury and executioner... Everyone will pay, whether physically or emotionally, for the crimes that they've committed."

By this time, news comes that Tarantino has abandoned his quest for snow and rescheduled to continue shooting interiors. We are finally to be allowed onto the set — an extraordinarily detailed log cabin, plus outhouse and stable, built by Yohei Taneda, who created *Kill Bill's* House Of Blue Leaves. This is Minnie's Haberdashery, where around 80 per cent of the film's events — give or take the odd cutaway to events that flesh out certain backstories — will unfold. Like a pimped-out version of *Reservoir Dogs'* warehouse, Minnie's is a huge, timber rest-stop-slash-trading-post filled with arcane bric-a-brac, where Tarantino is directing Russell and Leigh in a scene that takes place shortly after their arrival. Seven of the Eight are here. To recap: John Ruth (Russell), Daisy Domergue (Leigh), Bob (Bichir), Joe Gage (Madsen), British hangman Oswaldo Mobray (Roth) and Confederate general Sanford Smithers (Dern), with stuntman Clay Donahue Fontenot standing in for Jackson.

Russell is a regular Yosemite Sam, a whiskery varmint trying to fix himself a decent cup of coffee while handcuffed to a deadpan psychopath, much to the amusement of the others. John Ruth wasn't originally written for him, he says — there simply came a point when Tarantino called and said, "I'm hearin' your voice here." He was happy to accept, first for the live read, then for the movie.

"John Ruth is one of those bombastic forces that has gone through his life having learned to live by his wiles," Russell muses. "He just crashes through everything. He's not as smart as he thinks he is — he's like a man who took a high dive in a low well. He's been chained to this woman for a week, so he's probably had zero sleep. He's reaching his wits' end. He's extremely paranoid about what might be occurring at all times, so he's more than a bully, he's a bombast. A bull in a china shop."

He says that, despite the era and the remote location, *The Hateful Eight* has a lot in common with *Reservoir Dogs*.

"It's pure character, and once you move inside Minnie's, primarily you're in one room. But the room is *big* and the people in it are *big*. I think what we're all enjoying as actors is just finding the tonal changes that go with what he's saying. You're gonna laugh. But you're also gonna think, 'Holy shit. Are you kidding me?'"

THE GREAT INDOORS

QT MOVES THE NORMALLY OUTDOORSY WESTERN INSIDE, BUT IT'S BEEN DONE BEFORE, TO SUPERB EFFECT...



Rawhide (1951)
Outlaws planning a gold robbery take over *Rawhide*, a watering stop on the stagecoach route, holding employee Tyrone Power and passenger Susan Hayward hostage. Eventually, Power turns the tables and mounts a one-man mission to harry the crooks. Yes, it's the Western precursor to *Die Hard*.

Johnny Guitar (1954)
Nicholas Ray brilliantly used a limited budget in this bizarre, cheapie Western, restricting most of the action to interiors — primarily a huge, two-floored saloon — by necessity, but also ensuring his meagre setting was packed with fantastic characters, most importantly Joan Crawford as bar-owner Vienna.

Rio Bravo (1959)
John Wayne, Dean Martin, Walter Brennan and Ricky Nelson hole up in the town jail after arresting the murderous brother of a powerful cattle baron. Howard Hawks' template for many siege stories —

he did it all again in *El Dorado*, and John Carpenter retooled the premise for *Assault On Precinct 13*.

Big Deal At Dodge City (1966)

Poor farmer Henry Fonda gets into a high-stakes poker game only to suffer a heart attack when he's dealt a seemingly unbeatable hand. His anti-gambling wife (Joanne Woodward) gets in the game to retrieve the family's life savings. Brilliantly scripted by Sidney 'The Hustler' Carroll, with a succession of ingenious twists and great character acting.

Alias Smith And Jones: Night Of The Red Dog (1971)

In this second-season episode of the TV show, former outlaws Heyes (Pete Duel) and Kid (Ben Murphy) find themselves snowed in in a cabin all winter with partners in a fabulous gold strike. They start playing cards... and wagering their portions of the gold dust. Another great gambling-themed Western, with an added claustrophobic edge.

KIM NEWMAN





Samuel L. Jackson's Major Marquis Warren covers all bases. Below: QT and Tim Roth compare hands.



Roth's Oswaldo Mobray and Walton Goggins' Mannix come to blows. Below: Six-Horse Booty.



Day Four, Volume Two:

TARANTINO AND I

The set of Minnie's Haberdashery is as close to being in the 19th century as you could get. There are no heaters, and in the absence of real snow, a smattering of the fake variety flutters past the windows. There isn't one square foot that isn't filled with detail. You can see through the walls. Back in those days the wood wasn't joined together perfectly. Snow comes in through the cracks.

And here is Quentin Tarantino talking with DP Robert Richardson about how to light a scene involving a roaring log fire, when lunch is called. With little ceremony, he signals it is time to talk. "In the Tarantino theme park," he says, taking in the set as we sit at a long, wooden table, "there definitely will be a Minnie's."

It's been a year since the script was leaked, and the betrayal is still raw. "I was devastated," he says softly. "I was devastated. Because it wasn't a work to be seen. The ending wasn't really *the* ending, it was just *an* ending. And the fact that it was somebody close who screwed me felt really bad."

Did he ever find out who leaked it? "It's one of six people."

Fittingly, this Agatha Christie element lends itself rather well to the plot. *The Hateful Eight* isn't so much a whodunnit as a who-will-do-what, a riddle that bubbles away throughout the film. Though this is his first crack at a mystery-thriller, he claims it didn't require a change to his writing style, an intuitive process that reached its peak in *Inglourious Basterds* when he suddenly 'realised' that his characters were going to kill Adolf Hitler. "I didn't know who the bad guy, or bad *guys*, were when I started. I waited for them to reveal it to me. I didn't do the mystery thing where you figure out who did it and then you go backwards. I wanted to find out myself too."

As Goggins hinted, this is a story where nobody is quite what they seem. "Everybody's got a big past," says Tarantino. He sees the film as having more in common with '60s Western TV shows like *Bonanza*, *The High Chaparral* or *The Virginian* than it does with big-screen oaters. "On those shows, maybe Brian Keith or Charles Bronson is the guest star, and Trampas or the Virginian is helping them out. They usually have some big chequered past that's revealed at some point in the story. And it's usually not 'til the end of the episode that you realise they're a good guy or a bad guy. I always found that really interesting. So I thought, 'Let me take eight of those characters,

but without the good guys to balance it out, so you don't have any moral compass that you can fall back on. Let's take eight of those sketchy guest-star characters, have them be played by the same kind of cool, groovy actors, then trap them in a room and have them hash it out.'"

Though it would seem to be a pure genre exercise, *The Hateful Eight* stands to be the director's most powerful screenplay to date. Following, historically, almost directly on from *Django Unchained*, its questions about racism, violence and justice in a post-slavery society are explicitly relevant today (Tarantino's later presence at an anti-police brutality march in New York is no coincidence). That, though, is the only connection, apart from a single line of dialogue about black bounty hunters and the in-joke that Django's coat is hanging on the wall. "It's political overlap, I think, more than anything," Tarantino says.

He is effusive about how Westerns better reflect the time in which they were produced than any other kind of movie. "I mean, the '50s Westerns had a very '50s Eisenhower kind of an aspect about them. And then in the late '60s you had the hippie Westerns and the anti-Westerns. And in the '70s it was almost like we had the Watergate Westerns: now we're gonna rip down everything we believed about these heroes. All of a sudden you're getting these fucked-up stories about Wyatt Earp, Doc Holliday and Jesse James. All the Tyrone Power stuff goes out the window."

He doesn't hesitate to analyse his own Western along these lines, even if he insists it's unintentional. "It really kind of reflects that whole Blue State/Red State divide that exists in America at this time. Everyone nowadays just keeps saying, 'Well, the country's never been as divided as this since after the Civil War.' Alright, well *that's* when *this* takes place."

The result is another extraordinary story that starts big and homes in on a tense, claustrophobic focal point, turning the screws on the audience until the tension can do nothing but explode. It may come packed with big ideas and social commentary, but this couldn't be more QT. "When I wrote the La Louisiane scene in *Inglourious Basterds*, I thought, 'Wow, I just wrote a 20-minute version of *Reservoir Dogs* with Nazis!'" says Tarantino. "And I feel that way about this. Except this time it's with cowboys."

Two weeks later, a blizzard hits town. **E**

THE HATEFUL EIGHT IS OUT ON JANUARY 8 AND WILL BE REVIEWED IN A FUTURE ISSUE.



EMPIRE
presents

The Good Ol' Boy

WORDS
Nick de Semlyen

PORTRAITS
Steve Schofield

**EMPIRE HEADS TO THE FLORIDA ESTATE OF BURT REYNOLDS
TO SPEND AN ALL-ACCESS WEEKEND WITH THE BANDIT HIMSELF,
ONCE THE BIGGEST MOVIE STAR ON THE PLANET**

TYPE
Jordan Metcalf
WorldMags.net



HIS REFRESHMENTS ARE LAID OUT. A cluster of grapes, a glass of ice water and a bowl of Veggie Straws potato chips ('Zesty Ranch' flavour), arranged lovingly on a side-table.

The students are assembled. This Friday night, 18 of them have come. They include a retired Las Vegas cop, a local real-estate agent, and an actress who once played a nurse in an episode of *Miami Vice*. All here for the same reason: to learn from the man they sometimes call "the master", sometimes "Mr. R".

And finally, he enters. He was once the biggest movie star in the world, partying with the Rat Pack, romancing scores of Hollywood starlets, trashing an M1's worth of automobiles. Now 79 years old, he may appear frail, moving with the aid of a walking stick and wearing red-tinted spectacles, but that magnificent moustache still commands attention. The room erupts in applause as he walks to his special seat. Then a hush takes over, pupils awaiting his opening address. "Holy cow," says Burt Reynolds, stretching out his legs. "I've been working all day and I am *wiped*."

These are the hallowed halls of the Burt Reynolds Institute For Film & Theatre. The name suggests a vast hippodrome, perhaps with a racetrack around the back for practising car-flips. The truth is slightly less grand. Attendees drive to the town hall in Lake Park, Florida, and head to the second floor, passing the Community Redevelopment Agency, the Commission Chambers and other municipal bureaux to slow the pulse. There, inside the Mirror Ballroom, where a mirrorball dangles from beams of Dade County Pine, they have their acting evaluated by a living legend.

It's not easy to get in. To be invited into the \$40-a-session masterclass, you must prove yourself in 'Fundamentals', a course focusing on character development and body language. This

takes at least a year to do; some never make it through. A man in his twenties writes every month from Australia, imploring the Institute for a spot. *Empire's* visit, meanwhile, marks the first time a media outlet has been invited to sit in. Rather than be thrust onto the stage to tackle some Chekhov, we're ushered to a front-row chair beside Mr. R. From there, we watch for 90 minutes as nervous thespians strut their stuff for the *Smokey And The Bandit* star.

Anya and Beverly adopt Cockney accents to perform a scene from Philip Ridley's play *Vincent River*. Midway through, one of them stumbles on a line, later attributing it to her new dental braces. "Y'know, it's alright to add in a line about your braces," advises Reynolds. "I do it all the time, and get accused of it. If they want to take it out, they can. Truth is what we want."

Tracy, who is auditioning to join

the inner circle, joins veteran Rhonda to take on a scene from Neil Simon's *The Gingerbread Lady*. "That was real nice, kids," Reynolds tells them. "Real nice. Last time one of you was ahead of the other. Today you were together. It makes such a difference." There's a dramatic pause, before the master delivers his verdict. "Tracy... welcome to class."

Reynolds has spent the day in a sound booth, recording the audiobook of his new memoir *But Enough About Me*, and he wasn't joking about being wiped. But now and again he drops an anecdote that reminds you of where he's been. After another duo have channelled Taylor and Burton for a piece from *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?*, he nonchalantly declares, "I remember when Elizabeth was at my house."

That hush descends on the room once more. "She was in the bathtub," Reynolds continues, "and I suddenly



Burt Reynolds, photographed exclusively for *Empire* at the Burt Reynolds Institute for Film & Theatre, Florida, on October 2, 2015.



“IF I’D SAID YES TO *STAR WARS*, IT WOULD HAVE MEANT NO *SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT*...”



heard this scream. I said, ‘What’s the matter?’ She said, ‘They’re going to give me a million dollars for *Cleopatra*!’ At the time, nobody got a million dollars, especially a woman. I was so proud of her.” He lets loose one of his famous chuckles. “I said, ‘That’s great. But if you’re getting all that money, I get to jump in the tub with you...’”

IT WAS IN THIS VERY

room, back in 1955, that Reynolds began his ascent. A stocky 19-year-old, he’d become a star football player at Palm Beach High School but had recently injured his knee and was limping around in a funk. His English Lit teacher, an ebullient eccentric named Watson B. Duncan III, suggested he audition for the school play. “He tricked me,” smiles Reynolds, after wrapping up the class. “I started reading the page he gave me. Four

words in, he said, ‘You got the main part.’”

That part was Tom Prior, in Sutton Vane’s *Outward Bound*, a sort of proto-*Lost* in which guests on a luxury liner realise they’re dead. As the alcoholic Tom, Reynolds stormed the Mirror Ballroom with a *tour de force* performance that bagged him the Florida State Drama Award. “I still remember being up there,” he says, gazing at the stage. “I wasn’t nervous at all. I’d been dragged to Watson’s class, a black sheep sitting at the back like all jocks do, but I slowly started moving forward. He was beyond any teacher I ever had.”

Reynolds had the bug, and over the next 15 years flung himself into every challenge that came along. There were guest-spots on *The Twilight Zone* and *Flipper*, stints on *Gunsmoke* and *Hawk*, and movies like *Armored Command* and *Navajo Joe*. Between jobs, he worked as a truck driver, bouncer and dockworker.

Top: Reynolds and *Empire*’s Nick de Semlyen assess the students’ best efforts. **Above:** The Hollywood legend offers some sage advice.

Most character-building of all, he shared a New York apartment with Rip Torn.

“He was wild,” Reynolds says of the notoriously volatile *Men In Black* star. “One time they asked me to go duck-hunting in the Roosevelt Game Reserve for (*TV show*) *The American Sportsman*, and I took Rip with me. While we were walking around, some geese flew above us, squawking. Rip goes, ‘You know what they’re saying? They’re saying, “That’s the crazy Rip Torn down there.”’ He took his gun, said, ‘I’ll teach that sonuvabitch to talk like that,’ and shot one. I said, ‘Rip, you really *are* crazy.’ But I couldn’t help but love him. Still do.”

Reynolds built a reputation as a fearless man of action, stoked by his eagerness to do his own stunts. “The first one involved me going through a plate-glass window on a show called *Frontiers Of Faith*,” he says. “I got 125 bucks — a nice chunk of change in 1957.” On NBC series *Riverboat*, he’d ask the writers to add dangerous gags to the scripts. He felt more confident leaping off a building than saying his lines.

Then, in 1971, along came the perfect film. John Boorman had tried to cast Marlon Brando and Jack Nicholson in *Deliverance*, the tale of four city boys on an ill-fated canoeing trip, but retreated when they asked for \$500,000 each. He could, however, afford Jon Voight and the more or less unknown Reynolds, who even looked strikingly like a young Brando. Together with Ned Beatty and Ronny Cox, the pair headed to the Chattooga River in Georgia — 50 miles of white-water hell — for what would be a gruelling shoot, beset by wipeouts, injuries and near-drownings.

“*Deliverance* took 14 weeks to make, longer than most films,” Reynolds says, “but it created a great bond between us. It was a skeleton crew, and I got to learn so much about what goes into directing. John Boorman is still the best I’ve ever worked for.”

He still winces when recalling the day he cracked his coccyx on a rock. “The tailbone thing was real bad,” he says. “They’d tried throwing a dummy over the waterfall. I looked at the rushes and said, ‘It looks ridiculous. I can do better than that.’ So I went over myself and got mangled in the hydroflow. When I got out of hospital, I asked John, ‘How did it look?’ He said, ‘Like a dummy going over a waterfall.’”

Oozing with backwoods menace, *Deliverance* was a huge box-office hit, the one Reynolds had been waiting for. Suddenly, he was on the A-list. And he’d only climb higher. ➤

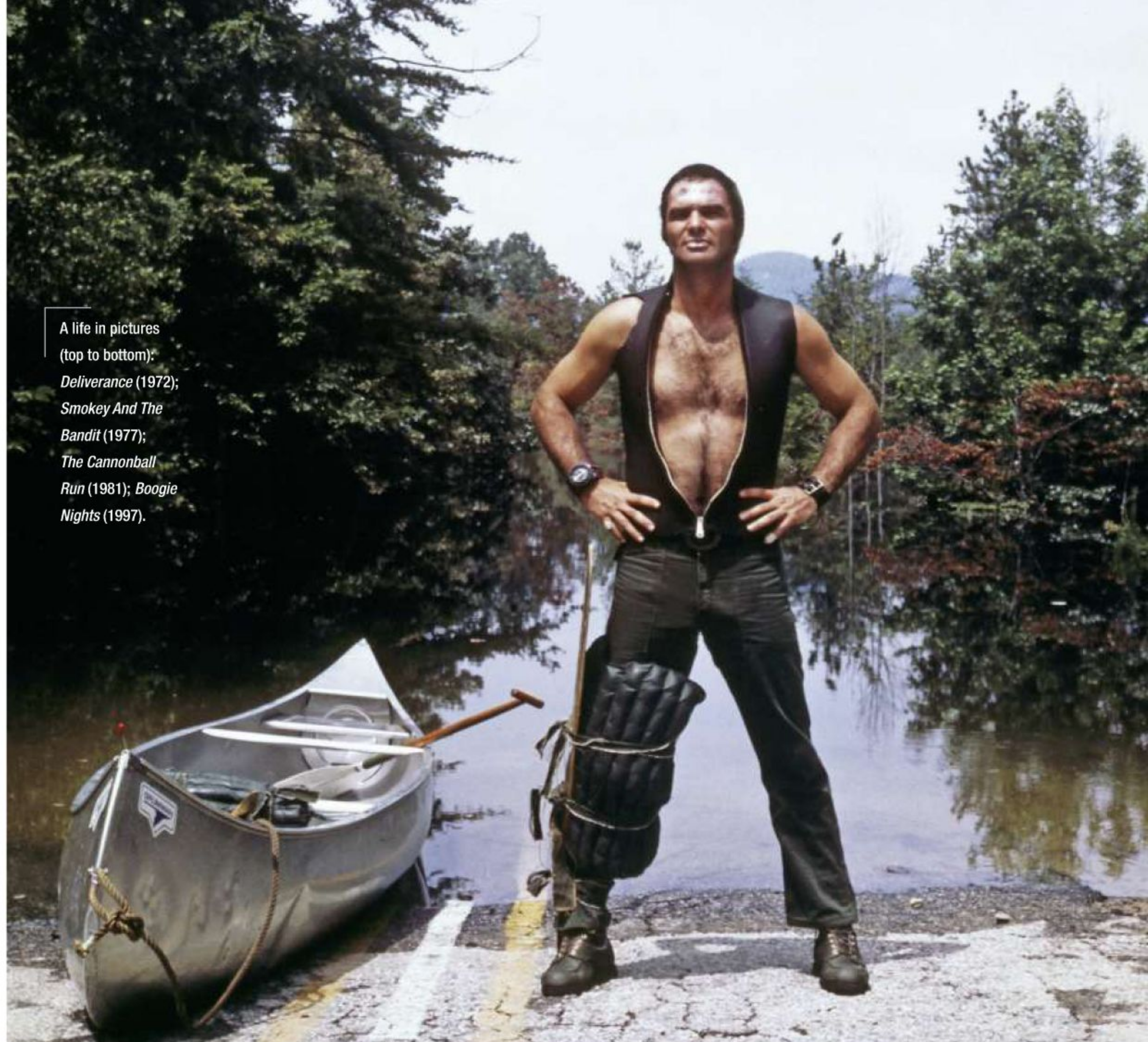
A SHORT DRIVE UP US 1

from the Institute is Burt Reynolds' mansion. *Empire* visits the next afternoon, and it's exactly what we'd hoped it would be. Beyond a set of forbidding gates, down an impossibly long driveway with signs like "NO TRESPASSING" and "RABBITS & SQUIRRELS HAVE RIGHT OF WAY", you find the five-bedroom house, named Valhalla after the Norse hall of the gods where fallen warriors meet their makers. Reynolds has lived here since 1980. In fact, he's stayed in these parts most of his life; a nearby park is even named after him.

The waterfront estate's 3.4 acres include a helipad and a yacht dock. Inside, it's even better. Reynolds auctioned off thousands of pieces of memorabilia last Christmas (see right), but his home remains stuffed with Burtifacts. A model railway track snakes around the ground floor. There's a private cinema, stocked with 35mm prints of his preferred films (including *My Favorite Year*, all 12 reels of *The Ten Commandments* plus, awesomely, *Moonraker* and *The Beastmaster*). In the rec room, meanwhile, a stuffed Kodiak bear guards the wet bar. "That's Jack," Reynolds explains. "I worked with him a few times. I once got jammed up between him and a tiger that got loose, on a set in Florida in the '60s. Once Jack passed away, his trainer mounted him and a few years later didn't have any place to keep him anymore, so that's when I got him."

Today is a rest day; the star is dressed down, in a sports jacket and elephant-skin boots. Again he seems exhausted, speaking slowly and sometimes in a low mumble, but he's happy to reflect on his unbelievable life. There are plenty of visual cues on the walls, like the group photo, taken at one of his birthday parties, featuring him surrounded by Frank Sinatra, Cary Grant, Jimmy Stewart, Dean Martin, Joan Collins, Sammy Davis Jr., Sid Caesar and Lucille Ball. Or the neon sign — "Burt's Place" — from his attempt to launch a nightclub in Atlanta, complete with stained-glass dancefloor featuring a rendering of his face.

Reynolds made it big in a canoe, but it was behind the wheel that he went stratospheric. "I'm the Picasso of car pictures," he said in 1994. If so, his Blue Period spans from 1973 (*White Lightning*) to 1982 (*Cannonball Run II*). Often collaborating with stuntman-turned-director pal Hal Needham, those nine years saw him pursued by the Highway Patrol across endless asphalt, performing ever-more-outrageous stunts. 1977's *Smokey And The Bandit*, which paired him with an adorable Sally Field, was the



pinnacle of his gum-chewing, beer-sipping, wisecracking persona: only *Star Wars* topped it at the US box office that year.

"When *Smokey* was released I was at my ranch with Sally," he says. "We took a drive and saw this crowd outside the Palm Beach Mall. I thought there must have been an accident, so we pulled into the parking lot to see what was going on. And there was no accident. They were all waiting to get into the theatre to see *Smokey*. I actually got a little nervous."

All his dreams, it seems, were coming true. For *The Cannonball Run* he was paid \$1 million per week, prompting him to say, "It was immoral to offer anyone that kind of money. It would have been even more immoral to turn it down." He was invited to the White House ("President Reagan asked me to pray with him") and Buckingham Palace ("A manservant came out and said, 'The Queen Mother would like to see you.' I said, 'Oh my God, what did I do wrong?'"). He bought a racehorse and a petting zoo. Between marriages he dated Farrah Fawcett, Catherine Deneuve and Field. He worked with Mel Brooks and Woody Allen, made a musical ("He dances like a drunk killing cockroaches," sneered one critic), even released an album.

But not everything was peachy. For one thing, his father, 'Big Burt', a chief of police, seemed unimpressed. "There was always tension there," reflects Reynolds, "because he wasn't able to express himself."



BANDIT'S LOOT

LAST CHRISTMAS, BURT AUCTIONED OFF MANY OF HIS PERSONAL EFFECTS. WE ASKED HIM TO EXPLAIN SOME OF THE MORE INTRIGUING ITEMS



1 "FORGET THE DOG, BEWARE OF BURT" WARNING SIGN (ABOVE)
SOLD FOR: \$1,280
 No explanation needed. "It was a gift from somebody. I did have a dog at the time, but not anymore. I loved that dog."

2 SIGNED FRIENDS CAST PHOTO
SOLD FOR: \$2,560
 Could this item be any more random? It turns out there's a connection between Burt Reynolds and the biggest sitcom of all time: cinematographer Nick McLean, who began his career working with Reynolds and also shot *Friends*.

3 SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT GO-KART
SOLD FOR: \$13,750
 "The go-kart was custom-built for [my son] Quinton." Perhaps not as nifty as a 1977 Pontiac Trans Am, but still a handy vehicle for when you need to elude a pesky law-enforcement officer — so long as they're also in a go-kart.

4 DELIVERANCE CANOE
SOLD FOR: \$17,920
 "This is one of several used in the actual movie. I repaired it by putting a few ribs across where it had broken in half." Not included in the asking price: terrifying child with banjo.

5 JOHN FORD'S DESK
SOLD FOR: \$28,000
 This 19th century mahogany monster once belonged to one of Hollywood's most lauded purveyors of the Western. "He's the best. The greatest director there's ever been. I don't know how many times I've seen *The Searchers*."

6 ALLIGATOR-SKIN COWBOY BOOTS
SOLD FOR: \$3,250
 Monogrammed with their owner's initials, this is one of many pairs of flashy boots sold off. "I loved them all, though they were hard to get off. I was wearing those early in my career. (Former love) Dinah Shore was a big influence on the way I dressed. She made me a lot smarter."

I think he was proud of me, but he never said so. It was hard for me." For another, there was his break-up with Field, whom he still considers the love of his life. "I was so busy back then that I really didn't take the time for myself or others in my life... I really should have taken more time to be with Sally. I regret that to this day."

Other regrets: turning down Jack Nicholson's role in *Terms Of Endearment* and 007 in *Live And Let Die*. "I met with (Cubby) Broccoli in Miami and told him, 'An American can never play James Bond,'" he says. "Another brilliant career move. He must have listened to me, because there hasn't been one. Turning down *Terms Of Endearment* was my biggest mistake, because Jim Brooks wrote the part for me. But I'd promised Hal I'd make *Stroker Ace*. I also regret not doing *Zardoz* (which would star Sean Connery). I got sick and wound up having to tell John Boorman I couldn't do it. It broke his heart and I've always felt bad about it."

The biggest role Reynolds claims he rejected was Han Solo. But this one doesn't bother him so much. "I thought it was a decent picture, but I didn't love it," he says. "And if I'd said yes, there would have been no *Smokey And The Bandit*: they were filmed at the same time." In retrospect, they make a great double bill: who is the Bandit but Solo with a less furry co-pilot and Coors in the hold? Curiously, a 1971 episode of Reynolds' cop series *Dan August* features Harrison Ford in a tiny role. Hunt it down: it's your only chance to see the man who would be Han Solo share the screen with the man who coulda been.

CALAMITY STRUCK IN

1984. Reynolds was finally making a movie with old friend Clint Eastwood: Prohibition comedy *City Heat*. But during the filming of a bar-fight scene, somebody accidentally walloped him over the head with a heavy metal chair. He got up in agony, but carried on filming. "I didn't want to let down Clint," he remembers, "so I played it down. If I only knew that that was the best it was going to be for a long while, I'd have handled it differently."

What became clear over the coming months, as he popped painkillers to get through each day, was that there was something seriously wrong with his jaw. Beset by blinding headaches and dizziness, he starting consuming up to 50 Halcion pills a day, at one point suffering a nine-hour hallucination during which he was convinced he was breakfasting with comedian Milton Berle. "That was probably the toughest time of my life," he says. "I started losing weight and the

rumour started going around that I had AIDS. I lost a lot of people that I thought were friends. But on a positive note I learned that the ones who stuck by me — Johnny Carson, Liz Taylor, Hal, a few others — were my true friends."

Eventually he overcame both injury and addiction, but a comeback has proved more elusive. He has worked steadily and eclectically, from the reboots of *The Dukes Of Hazzard* and his classic *The Longest Yard*, to *Universal Soldier III: Unfinished Business* and *Bean*. But the closest he's come to taking the world by storm again was 1997's *Boogie Nights*. As Jack Horner, the porn Mephistopheles who gives Mark Wahlberg's Dirk Diggler his big break, he put a dark spin on his old macho roles, earning a Golden Globe and an Oscar nomination.

Still, he's not a fan. "I felt it glorified pornography," he explains. "I made a lot of friends on set, but I wasn't impressed by the Method acting going on. Mark walked around wearing a fake erection. And Heather Graham stayed in character the whole time, with half her clothes off..."

Not a complaint you expect to hear from the sex symbol who famously posed buck-naked on a bearskin rug for *Cosmopolitan* in 1972. Though he admits he wishes he'd never done it, the image lives on via internet memes and a recent promo pic for *Deadpool*, with Ryan Reynolds (no relation) recreating the pose. And this is far from his only legacy.

Edgar Wright has studied the Reynolds-directed *Sharky's Machine* as prep for his forthcoming car movie *Baby Driver*. Tarantino used musical cues from *White Lightning* in both *Kill Bill* and *Inglourious Basterds*. A picture of Reynolds popped up in *Bridesmaids*. And after playing the Almighty in an episode of *The X-Files*, he recently voiced a devastatingly sexy version of himself on animated series *Archer*, causing a female character to sigh, "I swear to God, you could drown a toddler in my panties right now."

All are tributes to the indomitable Mr. R: the man who has seen and done it all, who has survived bad reviews, ill health and irked ex-wives, who still insists on doing his own stunts.

Time comes for *Empire* to depart the master's mansion. We shake Reynolds' hand and leave him, surrounded by memorabilia, ursine keepsakes and a large painting of himself in his prime, stripped to the waist and rippling with muscles. It's our last glimpse of Valhalla, the place where warriors can rest at last. ■

BUT ENOUGH ABOUT ME IS OUT NOW AS A HARDBACK, AN eBook AND AN AUDIOBOOK.

EMPIRE Christmas Gift Guide

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DISNEystore.CO.UK



• PHOTOGRAPHY: CONOR SHEEHAN

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iPad Pro

£TBBC

Apple has spent years making its technology smaller, but now it's running in the other direction. The iPad Pro has a screen three inches bigger than your standard iPad, so it's ideal for gaming, drawing, movie-watching or making the digital version of *Empire* massive.

APPLE.COM/UK

Sony Xperia Z5

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As used by 007 in *Spectre*. It has a 23MP camera, it's waterproof and it can read your fingerprints. If it's good enough for 007 to use for tracking baddies and texting M, it's good enough for us normals to use for ordering pizzas.

ESHOP.SONYMOBILE.COM/GB



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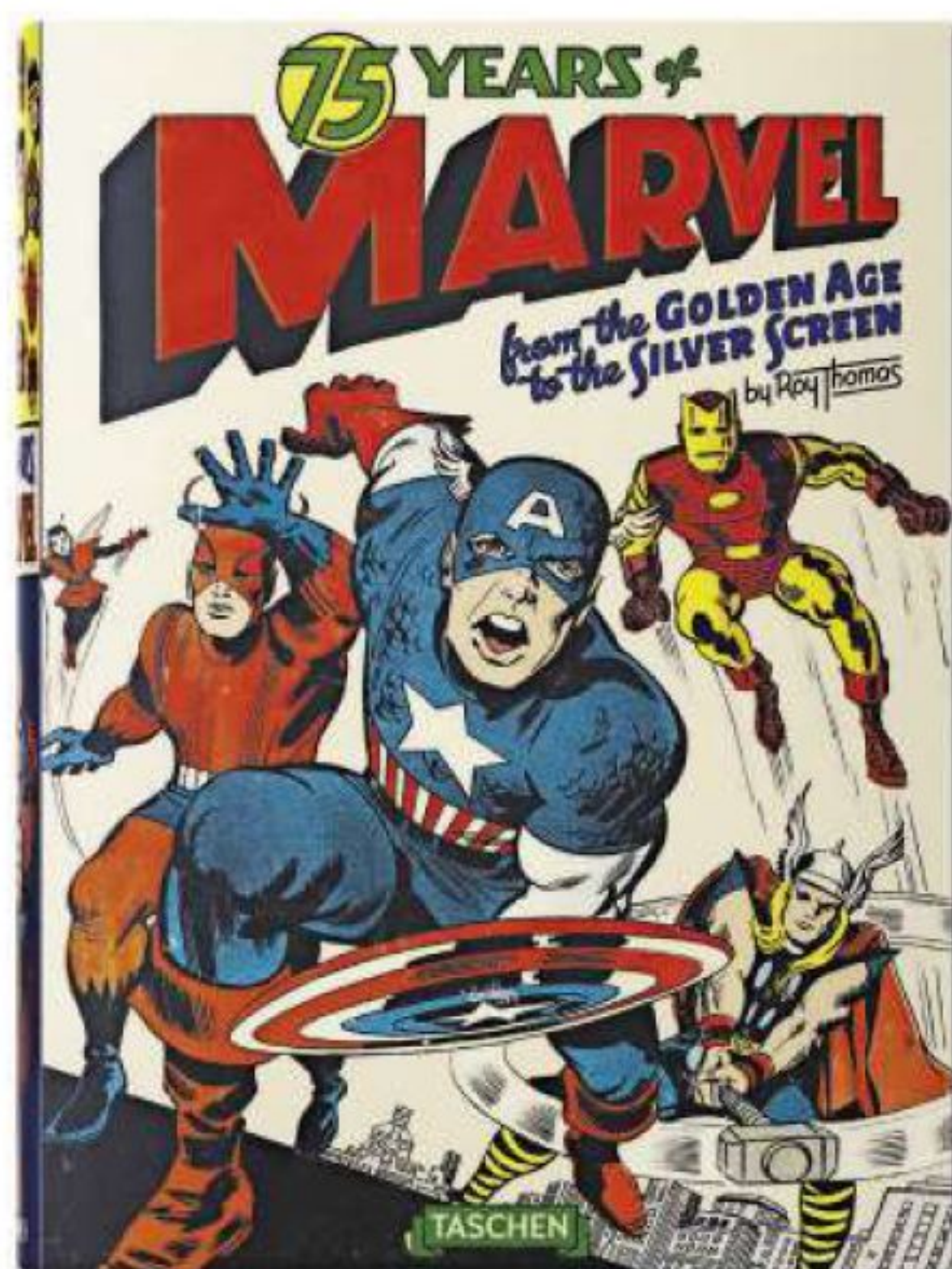
STAR WARS

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A new collection of Star Wars timepieces
and cuff links by Devon. © Lucasfilm Ltd.

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This exceptionally cool T-shirt from US firm Mondo serves as a litmus test for '80s-movie geeks. If you don't get it at first look, you need to re-watch the film then have a strong word with yourself. Unlike Mogwai, it's just fine to get it wet.

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The Charlie Chaplin Archives

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The latest in Taschen's exhaustive 'Archives' series is dedicated to the Little Tramp. Old Chaplin interviews are used to provide an oral history of the actor's career, lavishly illustrated with over 900 images. Any film nerd will happily paw over this for days.

AMAZON.CO.UK



BATTLE THE DARK SIDE
 FOR UP TO
15 HOURS LONGER*



STAR
 THE FORCE AWAKENS
WARS
 ONLY IN CINEMAS

*Based on Alkaline Duracell Ultra Power AA vs Leading Zinc batteries in Hasbro Lightsaber performance testing. © & TM 2015 Lucasfilm Ltd. © 2015 Hasbro. All Rights Reserved. Used under authorisation.

Here: Kate Winslet
and Michael
Fassbender at
the gala screening
of *Steve Jobs*.
Below: Cate Blanchett
pitches up for *Carol*.



THAT'S A WRAP!

**EMPIRE, GOTHINKBIG AND O2
TEAMED UP TO GIVE THREE
YOUNG PEOPLE THE CHANCE
TO ATTEND THE BFI LONDON
FILM FESTIVAL AND REPORT
ON IT FOR *EMPIRE ONLINE*.
HERE'S HOW THEY GOT ON...**

WITH 240 FILMS from 72 countries in 2015, there was a lot of the BFI London Film Festival to cover. That's why *Empire* needed to recruit

three up-and-coming journalists as extra hands on deck. Luckily, we had help from O2 and GoThinkBig, the online careers hub that can help you develop your skills and build contacts that will help you get ahead. We had hundreds of applications, but whittled the numbers down to three talented young writers: Anjali, Alastair and Toni. Armed with nothing but a voice recorder and a smile, they ventured out to the festival's gala screenings to interview names like Cate Blanchett, Danny Boyle, Kate Winslet and Rachel Weisz. Read on to hear about their red-carpet experience...



How did you find out about the GoThinkBig LFF experience? I heard about this last year but I was still at university. This time around, I couldn't pass up the opportunity.

What was the best film you saw over the course of the festival? I think they saved the best 'til last, with Michael Fassbender in *Steve Jobs*. I came out of the cinema in absolute awe.

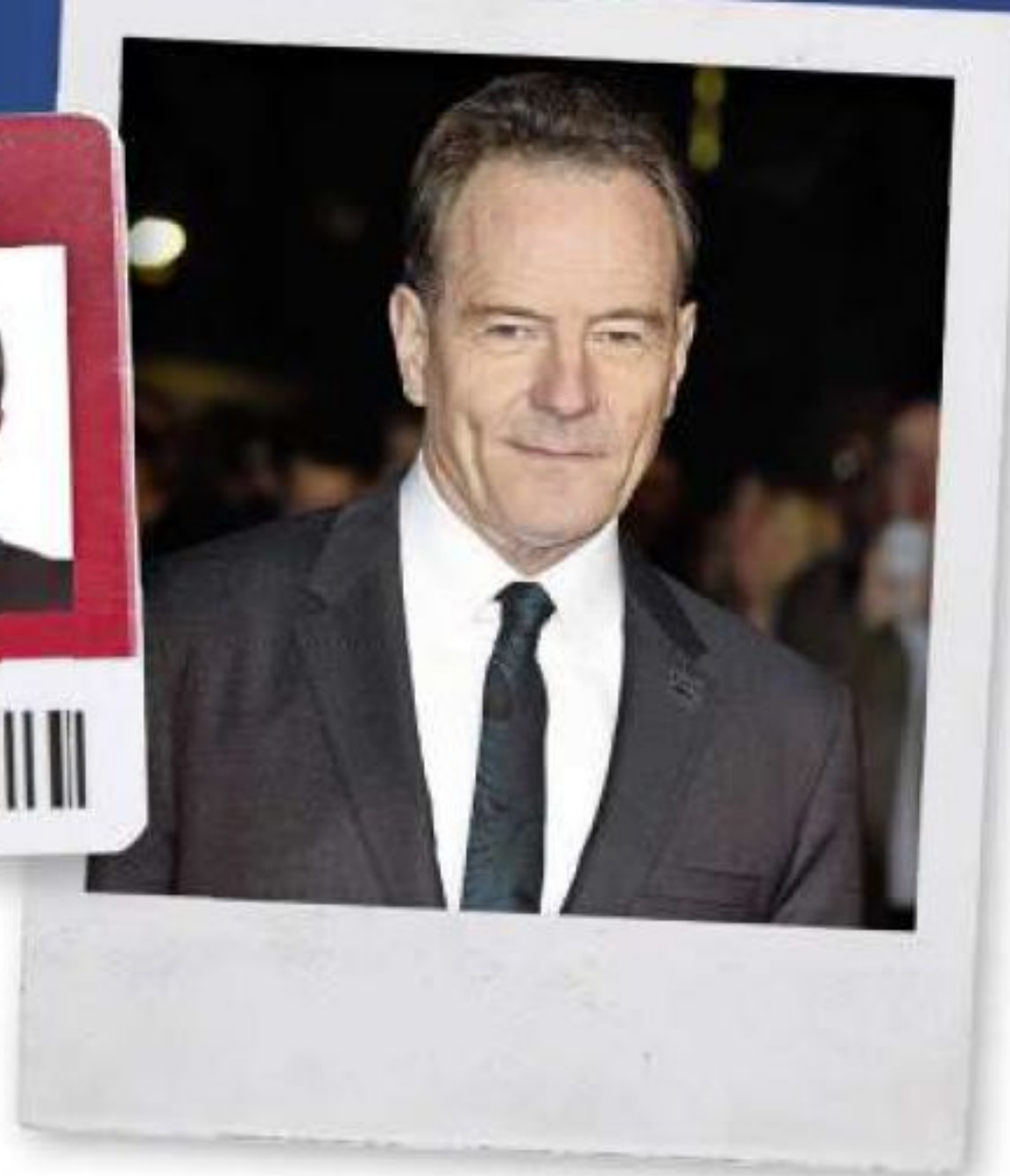
Who did you get to speak to? The best moment was with Cate Blanchett at the *Carol* gala — she was so lovely!

What has the GoThinkBig LFF experience done for you? This experience has shown me what it's

“Cate Blanchett was so lovely.”

like to work under pressure to get a story finished and published on the same night, and it's been very exciting to see my work published on *Empire's* website.

What's the one piece of advice you'd give people trying to get into journalism? Start with GoThinkBig. They advertise loads of work experience on the likes of *Empire*, *Grazia*, *heat*, *Closer* and *FHM*. Also, go down to GoThinkBig's speed-dating events because they're a brilliant way to meet and talk to journalists.



Who did you get to speak to while you worked the red carpet? My highlight was interviewing Danny Boyle as I'm an obsessive fan, but I also spoke to Kate Winslet, Helen Mirren, Rachel Weisz, Saoirse Ronan and Bryan Cranston. I was terrified before opening night because I'd never done anything like this – and that was before protesters crashed the red carpet! Seeing my first piece published wasn't bad either.

What was the best film you saw over the course of the festival? My favourite was *Room*, starring Brie Larson. It had me in pieces. A serious Oscar contender come February.

What would you say is the biggest thing you learned? That movie stars aren't scary! I learned how to get good answers in interviews just by being confident – and how to turn around

“Movie stars aren't scary!”

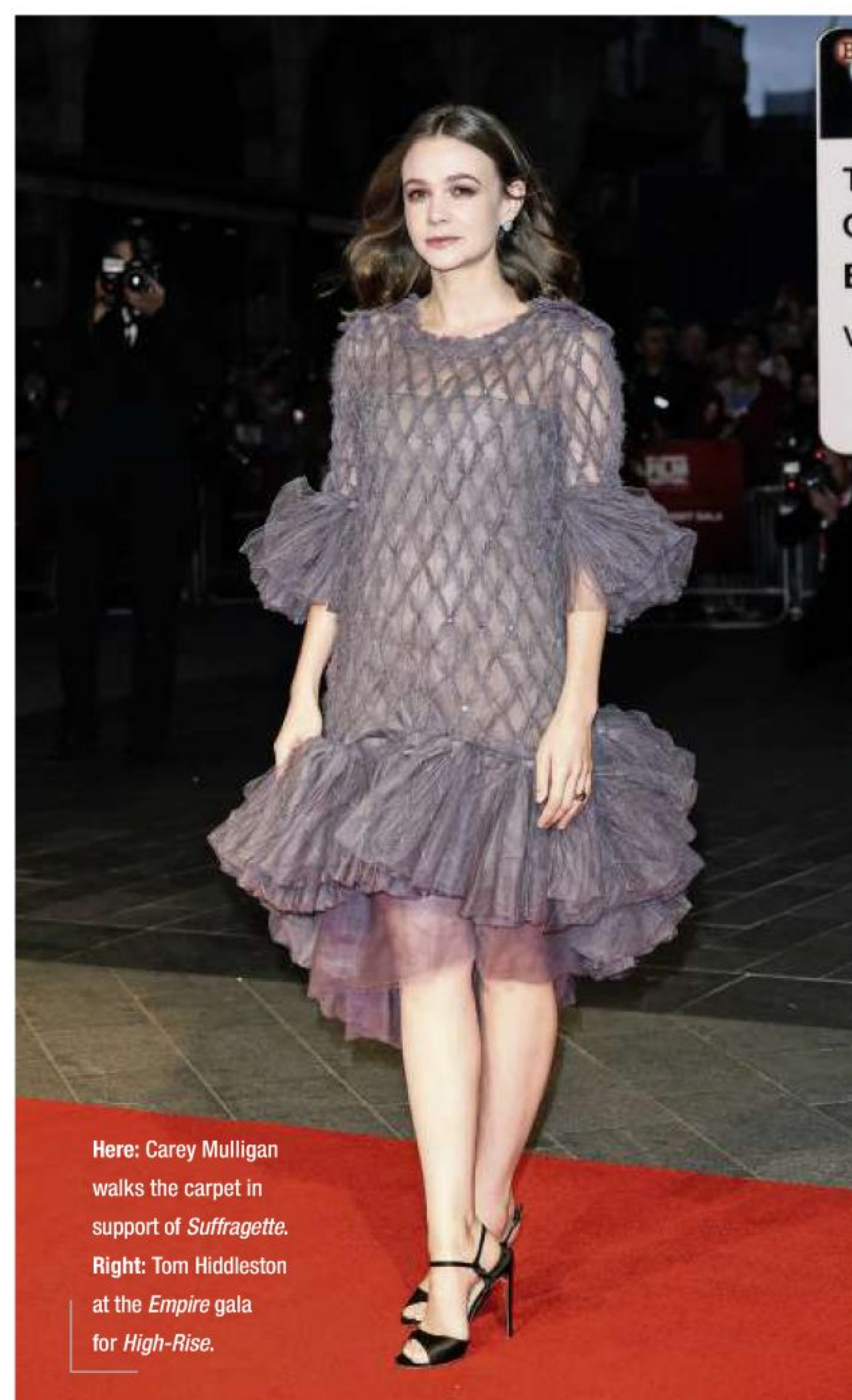
a polished few hundred words the same night, too.

What has the GoThinkBig LFF experience done for you? It's put a shiny new selling-point at the top of my CV, and career-wise it's motivated me right at a time when I needed it.

What piece of advice would you give people trying to get into journalism? Apply for anything and everything you come across. I didn't think I had any chance with *Empire* but it worked out.



Above left: Bryan Cranston steps out for *Trumbo*. Here: Colin Farrell and Rachel Weisz attend the gala for *The Lobster*.



Here: Carey Mulligan walks the carpet in support of *Suffragette*. Right: Tom Hiddleston at the *Empire* gala for *High-Rise*.



How did you find out about the GoThinkBig LFF experience? My friend linked me to the application page with a few hours left to apply (and has been incredibly smug about it ever since).

Any scary moments on the carpet? I forgot how to speak in front of Harvey Keitel. His eyes are intense. I felt as though he'd seen into my soul and found it lacking.

What's the biggest thing you learned? Go to the toilet before the stars arrive. More seriously, I've learned I'm capable of a great deal more than I thought I was.

What has the GoThinkBig LFF experience done for you? It's been

“Harvey Keitel saw into my soul.”

a massive confidence boost. I've always wanted to write for a living, but never thought it was possible until now.

What piece of advice would you give people trying to get into journalism? Persevere, persevere, persevere. Next time round, it could be you gawping at Tom Hiddleston from barely a foot away.

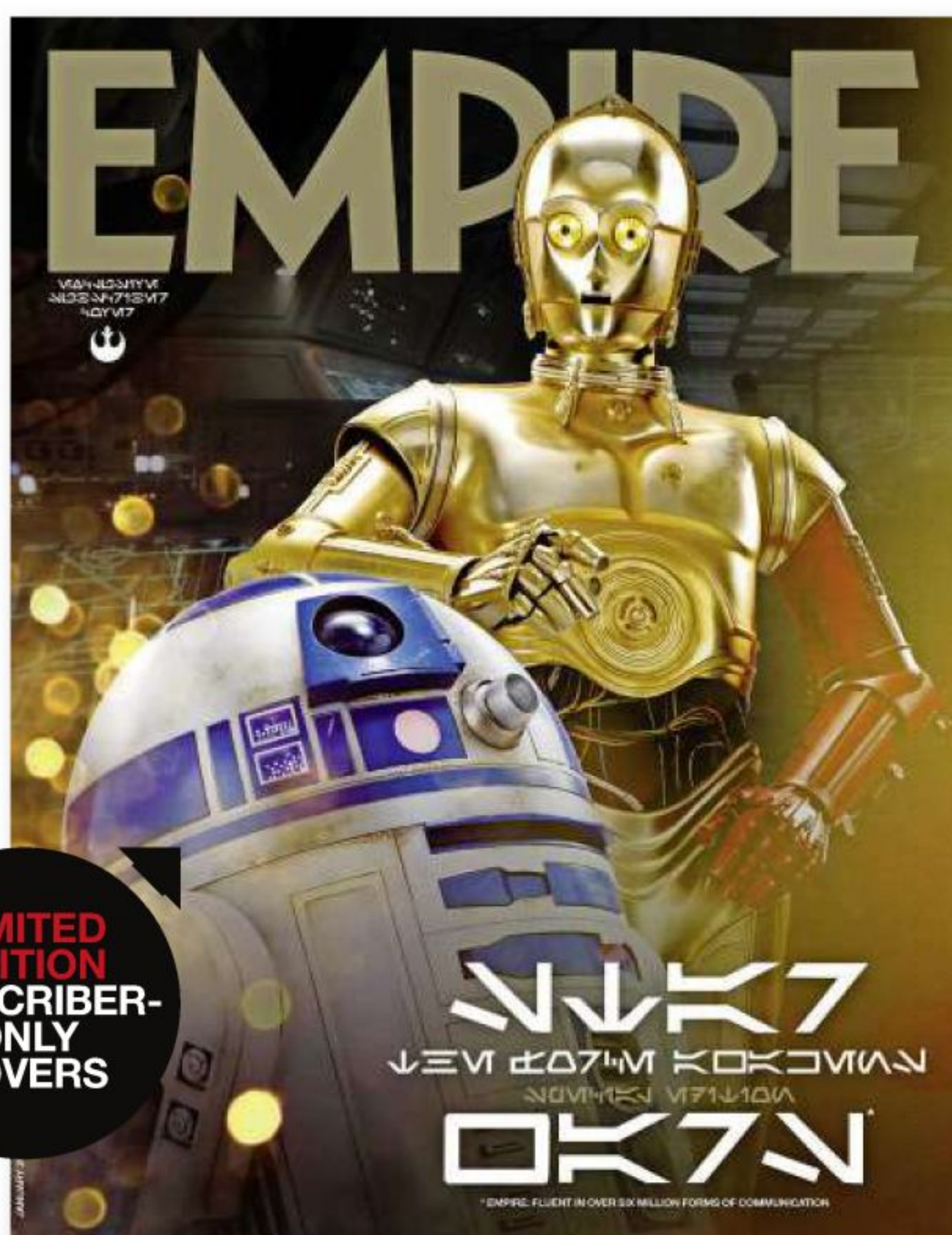
HOW TO GET AHEAD

Want to get first-hand experience on the world's biggest movie magazine or as part of an award-winning creative agency? Find out how to get work experience, develop your skills and find the right contacts by heading to gothinkbig.co.uk.



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REVIEW

NOVEMBER 26 — DECEMBER 30, 2015 | EDITED *by* NICK DE SEMLYEN



NEW RELEASE

TRAINWRECK

Comedy powerhouse Amy Schumer goes full steam ahead, introducing a new wave of romcom with a smart, cynical twist. (p.138)

ILLUSTRATION NOMA BAR

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Ant-Man

★★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 12

DVD BR

SMALL WONDER

WHEN PEYTON Reed's *Ant-Man* opened in July, its key rival was, in a sense, itself — or at least, a version of itself: that which would have come to pass had Edgar Wright, the project's instigator and original director, and Marvel Studios not parted company. But now the dust has settled, it's time to consign Wright's version to the Quantum Realm, and consider Reed's version for what it is. Which is the best Marvel movie of the year. A big statement for such a small film, but then, small was exactly what was required after the often-brilliant but dense planet-pummelling antics of *Avengers: Age Of Ultron*.

Ant-Man, for all its production issues, feels like a breath of fresh air — a quirky, bubbly caper flick that feeds off the charm of its affable hero. Star (and co-writer) Paul Rudd has been a past master at light comedy for years, and those rhythms and instincts fit perfectly here. It'll be interesting to see how his Scott Lang fits into *Captain America: Civil War*.

Rudd also shines in the special features, which are fairly first-base (short featurettes, defanged gag-reel). However, intriguing deleted scenes (including one where Lang first meets Hank Pym while casing his house) and a fun Rudd/Reed commentary save the day. On the latter, we learn that Rudd still has a voicemail from Michael Douglas, and that The Cure's *Plainsong*, which features heavily, comes from the second CD Reed ever bought. Most notably, during the post-post-credits sting (a clip from *Civil War*), Reed tries to get Rudd to declare whose side he's on — Iron Man's or Captain America's. For the record, it's... **CHRIS HEWITT**

EMPIRE VIEWING GUIDE

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SPOILER
ALERT!

WORDS **CHRIS HEWITT**

WHAT IS THIS — A VIEWING GUIDE FOR ANTS?



Young Hank Pym

The movie begins in 1989, introducing Hank Pym, the original Ant-Man, as a crusading S.H.I.E.L.D. member. And that is Michael Douglas, blended with a younger double and some CG facelifting courtesy of FX company Lola. "That visual effect terrified me the most," says director Peyton Reed. "Everyone knows what Michael Douglas looked like 25 years ago. But it doesn't feel plasticky, or have that Uncanny Valley feel to it."

18.27

Farewell, Frank

In a nod to *RoboCop*, Joe Chrest's businessman Frank pays the ultimate price for opposing evil CEO Darren Cross' (Corey Stoll) plans, getting zapped and reduced to a small mound of what looks like jam. And was jam. "Pre-CGI, as a stand-in, we put some Smucker's strawberry jam on there," laughs Reed. "There is some remaining jam in the final shot."



24.10

Breaking Bad

Yeah, the wonders of science! Here, Scott Lang (Paul Rudd) breaks into Pym's home, overcoming several obstacles using nothing but his smarts. "Adam McKay (who co-wrote with Rudd) has this friend who's a security expert," says Reed. "He could fuck up your life in a million different ways. And this guy was able to walk us through all the different versions of how Scott could break in somewhere. We talked to him about freezing metal and rigging a thumb-print reader."



30.30

In The Tub

Scott first tries on the Ant-Man suit in a bath, and gets more than he bargained for. Throughout, Reed carefully frames the shrinkified Scott in the context of other objects — a ring-pull, a plug one-and-a-half inches in diameter — for scale. "This was one of Paul's first days in costume," says Reed. "And one of the last effects we finalled. The tub sequence is so long, there was nowhere to hide."

32.53

The Original Ant-Man

When Scott lands on a car during his first run-out in the suit, he draws the attention of its driver. This is Garrett Morris, former star of *Saturday Night Live*, who played Ant-Man in a 1979 sketch alongside Bill Murray as Superman, Dan Aykroyd as the Flash and John Belushi as the Hulk.



58.48

The Wasp Lives! (And Dies)

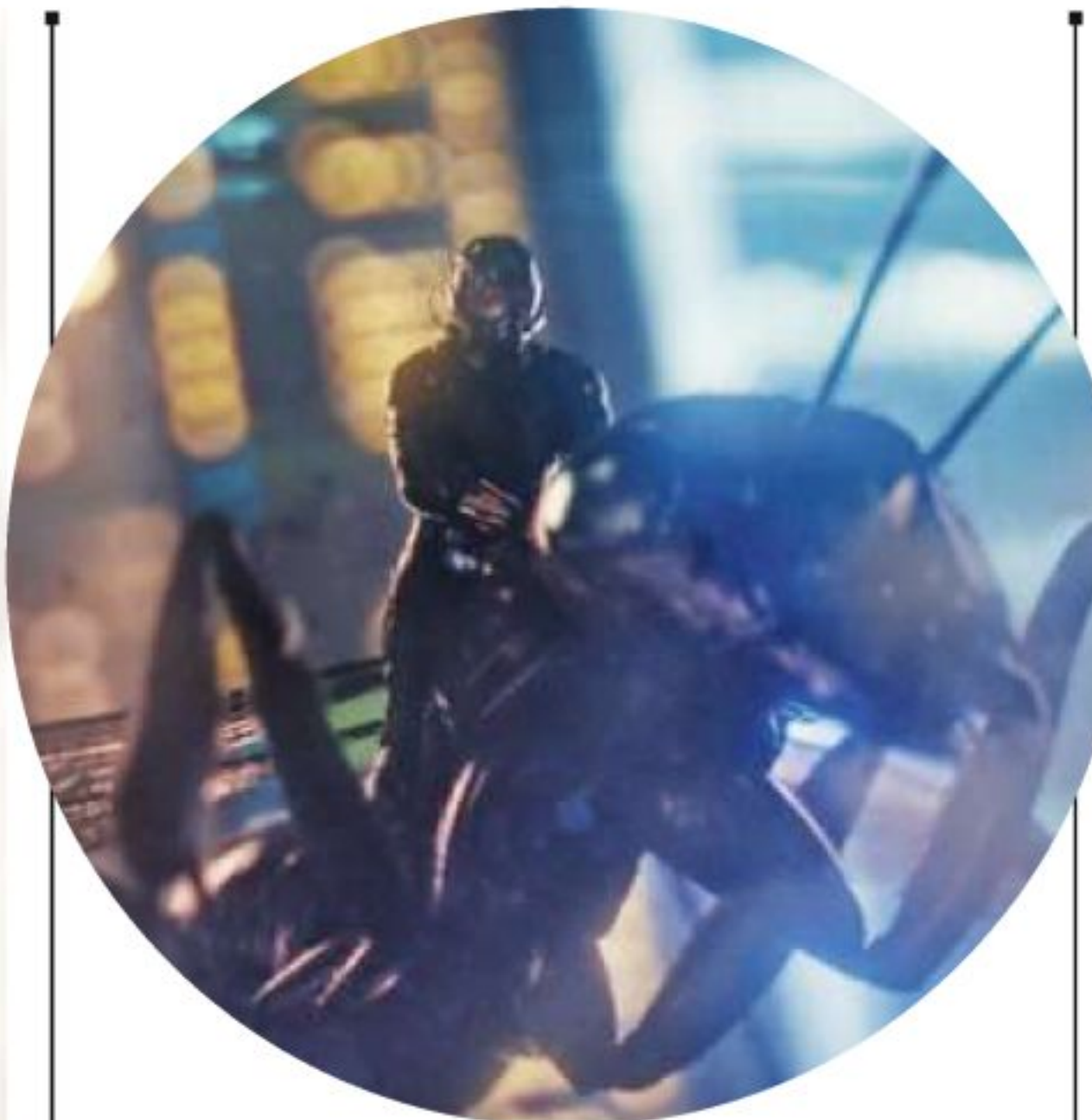
A relatively late addition to the movie saw the much talked-about Janet van Dyne (Hayley Lovitt), late wife of Hank Pym, make an appearance as his partner-in-microcosmic-crimefighting, the Wasp. “Her costume had to have a definite relationship to the Ant-Man costume, as Hank designed both of them,” says Reed. “Janet was not in the original draft (by Edgar Wright and Joe Cornish), but I wanted her to be a presence in the movie.”



1.02.56

Cut The Check!

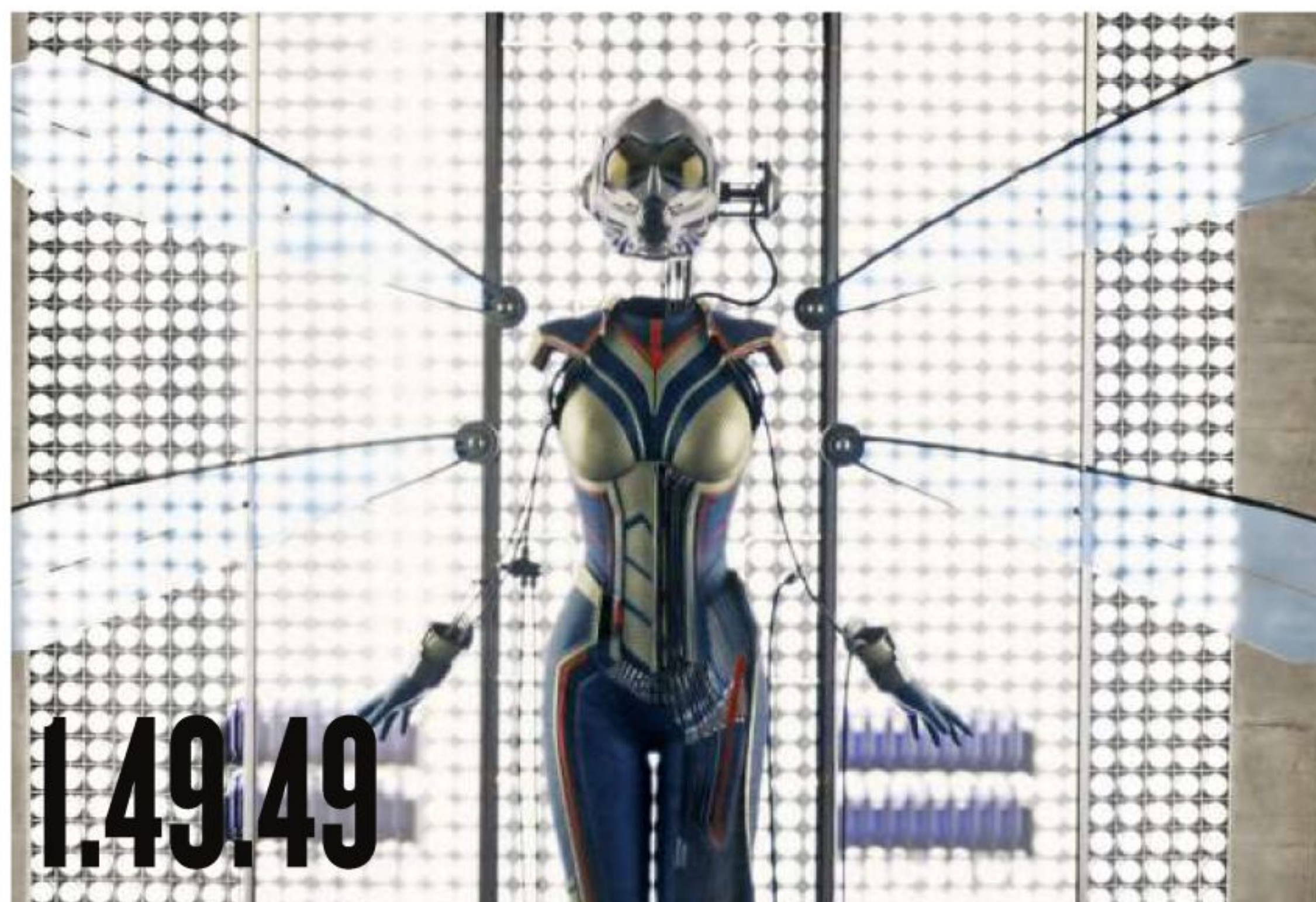
As Scott embarks on a pre-heist heist, he swiftly realises he’s accidentally targeted the New Avengers Facility (established in *Age Of Ultron*), and ends up embroiled in a battle with special-guest Avenger, Anthony Mackie’s Falcon. “It was Rudd’s idea,” says Reed. “It felt like if he fought Thor or Iron Man or Hulk, it would take the movie too far in a different direction. And as a kid, you wonder who’s going to win in a fight like this.” The duo will reteam in *Captain America: Civil War*.



1.30.24

Adios, Antony

In quite frankly the single biggest death to hit the Marvel Cinematic Universe to date, Scott Lang’s beloved insectisteed, Antony the ant, is blown away by a bullet. “We wanted to ask, ‘Can we make an audience feel real emotion for the death of an ant, something you step on every day?’” It’s a fair question, but nobody dies in comic-book movies... right? “He’s gone,” confirms Reed.



1.49.49

Wasp 2.0

“About damn time,” says Evangeline Lilly’s Hope as she eyes the new and improved Wasp costume once built for her mother, now intended for her. It’s a line that Reed intended to have an impact, as *Ant-Man And The Wasp* will see Hope become Marvel’s first female hero to be mentioned in the title. “It’s a long time coming,” says Reed. “I cannot wait to see Evangeline put on the suit and kick ass. How she moves, how she fights, how she flies. She has some issues in this first movie — how will they be resolved in the second?”

1.40.54

Quantum Leaping

As Scott ventures into the infinitesimally small world of the Quantum Realm, prepare your peepers and ready those pausing fingers: is this the silhouette of Janet van Dyne, the original Wasp? Does this indicate that she’s not dead, and that she can be saved? All will be revealed in the 2018 sequel, *Ant-Man And The Wasp*. “There’s a generational thing [about the title],” says Reed. “It really talks about Scott and Hope, but could also be talking about Hank and Janet.”

1.46.36

Stan The Man

The obligatory cameo of Marvel scion and *Ant-Man* co-creator Stan Lee comes near the end, where he plays the world’s oldest bartender in a jazzy montage. “We shot that in The Smokehouse, a great, old steak restaurant right across from Warner Bros.. It’s the restaurant George Clooney named his production company after.” Originally, Lee was meant to play a gambler in an underground den — a sequence that was never filmed.

Train peck: Amy
Schumer's Amy falls
for Bill Hader's Aaron.



Trainwreck

★★★★★

FROM DECEMBER 7 / CERT. TBC

DVD BR A A

OFF THE RAILS

ROMANTIC comedies worry a lot about likability, especially for their heroines. They seem to assume that audiences will only root for a girl whose worst flaw is a tendency to trip when there's a hunky man nearby to catch her. These women smile a lot, and quietly pine for Mr. Right. *Trainwreck* goes in the opposite direction, depicting Amy Schumer's Amy as a smilingly dishonest, sexually selfish disaster area who is taken aback by the

arrival of the charming, awkward Aaron (Bill Hader). Her romantic journey in this story is less about finding some happily ever after, and more about allowing herself to feel anything at all.

As Schumer notes on her commentary with Judd Apatow, this Amy is not some sort of role-reversal of the male-philanderer stereotype. Instead she's a woman who just hasn't been represented in romcoms — at least, not positively — until now. The film took flak from some quarters for 'slut-shaming', because it progresses from early sleeping-around scenes to a monogamous third act. But there's no shame here, just change, and a film without change wouldn't be much of a story.

Like all Apatow films, this could lose half an hour and be a tighter, funnier proposition. The commentary suggests that Apatow's problem is falling in love with all his cast, down to the many stand-ups drafted in for small

LIKE
THIS,
WATCH
THIS



OBVIOUS CHILD

(2014)

Another East Coast comedienne, Jenny Slate, heads up this indie about a spiky stand-up who discovers she's pregnant. It's a winning mix of sweet and sour.

roles. Admittedly, the supporting actors are on form, especially LeBron James and John Cena. Cena gives us the most cringeworthy dirty-talking scene in history ("I'm gonna fill you with protein. Give you the protein you need to survive"). James, playing himself as Aaron's best friend, delivers the most game performance by a sports mega-star since Kareem Abdul-Jabbar in *Airplane!* (sorry, *Dodgeball*'s Lance Armstrong — you blew it). In a less showy role, Brie Larson lends the film quiet heart as Amy's sister Kim.

Trainwreck does adhere to a more conventional romcom format in the latter stages, but it's a happy ending that feels earned as Amy reaches clumsily for an unlikely epiphany. Despite her own worst instincts (and her dad's terrible advice), she finds something she wants and works hard to get it, and that's something that too few romcom heroines have ever had to do. And when this heroine falls over, she pulls herself back up. **HELEN O'HARA**

ALSO OUT



The Gift

★★★★

FROM DECEMBER 7 / CERT. 15 DVD BR A

→ Joel Edgerton's self-penned-and-directed star vehicle is always compelling, a queasy psychological drama where it's increasingly debatable who the real villain is. Jason Bateman plays credibly against comedy type as the protagonist with whom we far from sympathise, and a fragile Rebecca Hall completes the unlovable triangle. **OW**



Maggie

★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15 DVD BR

→ A meditation on grief, this subdued tale sees a father (Arnold Schwarzenegger) forced to watch his zombie-bitten daughter (Abigail Breslin) gradually slip away. Though told at a glacial pace, it packs an emotional punch and Schwarzenegger turns in the most impressive dramatic performance of his career. **JD**



Knock Knock

★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 18 DVD BR A

→ Alone on Father's Day, Keanu Reeves lets two nymphets into his family house to call a cab — and gets teased and terrorised. Eli Roth's remake of 1977 hippiechicksploitation thriller *Death Game* is too farcical for suspense, but Reeves seethes out of his comfort zone as the schmuck who gets all his bunnies boiled at once. **KN**



Inside Out

★★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. U DVD BR A

JOY STORY

WE HAVE COME TO expect the bowling-ball gleam of Pixar's multiverse — all those exquisite details, such as the way in this, its latest

release, Joy's skin fizzes like freshly poured champagne. Start it anywhere, and it takes just seconds to figure out that this film originates from the Emeryville dream factory. What surprises you about high-end Pixar projects like *Inside Out* are the ideas.

After taking a year to regroup following a lapse into relative mediocrity with *Cars 2*, *Brave* and *Monsters University*, Pete Docter's fantastic voyage into the brain of crisis-struck, 11 year-old Riley is a reaffirmation of Pixar's core magic — storytelling ingenuity. Riley's

Above: Bing Bong, Sadness and Joy rock the brain's mainframe.

Below: Fear just couldn't get the hang of *Pointless*.

consciousness is essentially the bridge of a human starship, erratically piloted by five primary emotions, beyond which her mind becomes a fading theme park where Riley's childhood is slipping away. It is literally an imaginary place.

On the charming commentary, hosted by Docter and co-director Ronnie Del Carmen, there is much discussion of "invisible story elements". It is a search, Docter insists, for "what is authentic". Sure, it has the standard Pixar OS — an odd couple (svelte Joy and squat Sadness) figuring out a way home — but the calibration of emotion took months of scrutiny. Amy Poehler was pivotal in preventing Joy's unflagging positivity from becoming a drag. John Lasseter had been overheard grumbling, "I really don't like Joy."

The relationship between "inside" and "outside" worlds was incredibly tricky to envisage. 'Cinematography' was key: the outer world is given a shaky Steadicam look; inside Riley the 'camera' is "on a tripod". "I was inspired by Kurosawa," mentions DP Patrick Lin. Later, Docter points out a shot, as the human heroine steals from her mother's purse, lifted entirely from Hitchcock's *Marnie*. Pixar are serious filmmakers. **IAN NATHAN**





THIS IS ENGLAND '86-'90

This Is England '86 ★★★★★
This Is England '88 ★★★★★★
This Is England '90 ★★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 18

DVD BR

DO YOU REMEMBER THE FIRST TIME?



Independent Film Awards) and ridden the acclaim train straight on to the next project, gongs spit-and-polished in pocket. But Shane Meadows is no ordinary director. After his film — about a gang of young skinheads in Thatcher's Britain divided by a racist member's return from prison — became one of the most important British features of the mid-noughties, his overwhelming feeling was that there was much of the story — or several characters' stories — left untold. Spitball a quick sequel? Nah. Well, not quite. He decided to do three. On the telly. Years apart. In a time when TV was still en route to the big-name, big-money, high-production arena it is now, it was nothing short of revolutionary.

HIS IS ENGLAND was released to raves back in 2006, and most directors would have collected their awards (a BAFTA and a couple of British

Most of the cast signed on for the sequels, which show the same incredible attention to detail as the film: from the soundtracks (Toots & The Maytals to The Specials and The Style Council) to the hair and make-up (shaved heads, bowl cuts) and the costumes (Fred Perrys and Harringtons via braces and DMs).

Immersed in the mod revival subculture of the mid-'80s, *This Is England '86* (they're all titled after the year they're set) was first out the gate. While the film was largely a two-hander between Stephen Graham's Combo (the racist) and Thomas Turgoose's Shaun (the young outsider welcomed into the group), this inaugural TV outing zeroes in on Woody and Lol, the surrogate parents of the group, played both beautifully and brutally by Joe Gilgun and Vicky McClure.

After their wedding day falls apart in the first episode, their world spirals with alarming acceleration, as is so often the structure of Meadows' work. With

ALSO OUT

**Fear The Walking Dead: Season 1**

★★★★

DVD BR

FROM DECEMBER 7 / CERT. 18

→ This prequel moves from the deep South to LA, focusing on a family as they navigate riots, mass hysteria and numerous bitey corpses. Fleeting at six episodes, the humanity and stuttering disbelief of its protagonists is a welcome change from the grizzled ruthlessness of Rick, Glenn et al. **JD**

**Agent Carter: Season 1**

★★★★★

DVD BR

FROM NOVEMBER 30 / CERT. 12

→ A winning addition to the Marvel Universe, this period spy show found its feet far faster than Peggy's fellow S.H.I.E.L.D. agents. Hayley Atwell is a charming, charismatic lead, backed up with able support from James D'Arcy's uptight yet loyal butler Edwin Jarvis and the odd burst of smarmy charm via Dominic Cooper's Howard Stark. **JW**

**Better Call Saul**

★★★★★

DVD BR Apple TV

FROM NOW / CERT. 15

→ Part spin-off, part prequel, and a completely satisfactory return to the Breaking Badiverse. As it recounts the tragicomic origins of Albuquerque's dodgiest advocate, Jimmy McGill (Bob Odenkirk), the tone is more sombre, but the darkly absurdist trimmings locate it firmly in Walter White's world, despite his absence. S'all good, man. **DJ**



the return of Lol's abusive father (Johnny Harris) and a destructive affair with Woody's best friend Milky (Andrew Shim), each episode grows increasingly dark in tone and graphic in content. The final episode, which sees Lol visit her dad with a hammer up her sleeve, culminates in one of the most unflinching scenes of sexual violence in British TV history. While Channel 4 fielded complaints, McClure landed a well-deserved BAFTA nod.

Meadows' commitment to realism (most of his cast are untrained. Legend has it that Turgoose only auditioned after Meadows bunged him a fiver), demonstrated in '86, remains in '88 — the strongest of the sequels — but now laced with fantastical visions that distort reality as Lol struggles with the events of two-and-a-half years ago while raising her daughter alone in a council flat. Across town, in a semi, Woody — now alienated from the group — is suffocating beneath the respectability of the middle-class life he's trying to

Clockwise from left:

The cast in '90; Shaun (Thomas Turgoose) and Smell (Rosamund Hanson) grow closer in '86; Bad times for Lol (Vicky McClure) in '88.

embrace. This is Meadows at his most ambitious, minimising the humour (the grim desperation of Woody in an ironic Christmas jumper is keenly felt) and fully committing to the blackness through an exploration of justice, redemption and forgiveness.

They're themes that are resolved — to varying degrees of satisfaction — in '90. Rave culture may now have gripped the nation, but the secrets and sins remain. Combo is out of prison again and Lol can no longer hide. Two scenes in particular show just how far both Meadows and the actors have travelled: a Sunday dinner — the setting for Lol's confession filmed in one shot — and a café meeting between Milky and Combo both burrow into your brain, packing devastation unlike almost anything else homegrown TV has managed.

So, '92? Meadows says not. He's done. Probably. After all, he doesn't take the obvious way, the easy way. He's no ordinary director. **TERRI WHITE**



Mission: Impossible — Rogue Nation

★★★★★

FROM DECEMBER 7 / CERT. 12

DVD BR A

MISSION: IMPRESSIBLE



AMONG THE EXTRAS complementing this fifth Ethan Hunt outing is a six-minute featurette titled *Cruise Control*. It is, literally, about how in control of everything Tom Cruise is, with his director (Christopher McQuarrie), producers (Bryan Burk, J. J. Abrams) and co-stars (Simon Pegg, Alec Baldwin, Rebecca Ferguson) marvelling at his multitasking, domain-lording abilities as both the star and producer of *Mission: Impossible — Rogue Nation*.

As well as being possibly the most on-the-nose, pun-titled extra ever, it does highlight the degree to which this franchise is defined by Cruise — to the degree that it's impossible to imagine any other actor ever playing Hunt — in contrast to his moodier MI6 counterpart,

James Bond. (Who, by the way, enjoyed a rather similarly themed adventure this year: *Shadowy, string-pulling terrorist organisation! Bureaucratic threat to shut down a high-tech espionage outfit! Veteran agent going off the grid to pursue his own agenda! Showdown on the streets of London!*)

Yet, with all due respect to Mr. Cruise, neither he nor Hunt is the true hero here. There is a good reason why *Rogue Nation* is the best impossible mission since Brian De Palma's 1996 original. And that is writer-director McQuarrie who, now on his fourth collaboration with Cruise, clearly knows how to harness that potent Cruisiness to maximum effect.

It isn't just about strapping the star to an ascending freight plane. Or letting him hurtle along a Moroccan motorway at ludicrous speeds. It's also about knowingly situating him in a rich, spy cinema tradition via a pleasingly tight plot that provides so many winks and visual hat tips to great spy games of old (*North By Northwest*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *The Parallax View*...) that McQuarrie himself calls it "an homage-o-rama" on his breezy but detailed commentary with Cruise.

McQuarrie keeps the movie slick, grown-up, analogue and, importantly, respectful to the original TV show, which felt forgotten in previous instalments. After all, it's not *all* about Tom Cruise. **DAN JOLIN**

Above: Cruise clings to a plane, 5,000 feet above ground. As you do. Below: Rebecca Ferguson as agent Ilsa Faust.



ALSO OUT



Magic Mike XXL

★★★

FROM NOVEMBER 30 / CERT. 15 DVD BR A

→ If the first Channing Tatum stripper film was drama disguised as comedy, this just rips off its trousers and goes for laughs. It's devoid of conflict, or indeed plot, since these guys just want to reach their stripping convention and get naked. But the good-natured hunks like women and one another, so it's charming along the way. **HOH**



Paper Towns

★★★

FROM DECEMBER 14 / CERT. 12 DVD BR A

→ Those allergic to whimsy should steer clear of this coming-of-age tale in which Cara Delevingne's Manic Pixie Dream Girl makes Holly Golightly look like Gordon Gekko. Others will have fun with her husky enigma, as clues set awkward teen Nat Wolff on her trail. Better viewed as a Gen Y *Goonies* than anything more profound. **PDS**



Palio

★★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 12 DVD A

→ Twice a year, Siena stages the world's oldest horse race: a gladiatorial Grand National where bribery's rife and its bareback riders whip each other with ox penises. In Cosima Spender's film, rookie and champion thunder towards a final showdown that crackles with blood-fizzing suspense. Hoofs down, one of the year's best docs. **SC**

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Pixels

★★

FROM DECEMBER 5 / CERT. 12

DVD BR A

→ *Independence Day* meets *The King Of Kong* in an arcade misfire that's less sparky than the no-budget short it's based on. There are fun moments amid the 8-bit battles, and Peter Dinklage's Billy Mitchell-alike brings some gusto (and a mighty mullet). But laughs are sparse as Adam Sandler repels the invaders through sheer force of whiny passive-aggression. **PDS**



Misery Loves Comedy

★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. E

DVD A

→ A wealth of funny folk spill the beans on their comedy careers in Kevin Pollak's talking-heads-athon. Amy Schumer, Steve Coogan and Tom Hanks are among those discussing influences, anxiety and, yes, misery. If the line-up is short on diversity and the structure is scattershot, it still sheds some light on what it's like to make 'em laugh for a living. **ES**



Eden

★★★★

FROM NOVEMBER 30 / CERT. 15

DVD A

→ 2015 has offered two movies about wannabe DJs: *Eden* and *We Are Your Friends*. This French effort is the superior. Charting a clubber's odyssey through the dance scene from 1997 to 2013, its drama is muted, but the small moments are beautifully observed. Bonuses: a spirited defence of *Showgirls*, the Daft Punk origin story and a brilliant soundtrack. **NDS**



Listen To Me Marlon

★★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15

DVD BR A

→ This documentary is part therapy session, part ghost story, overlaying footage from Marlon Brando's life with his own mumbly reminiscences. It's a uniquely eerie hook, giving the effect of tunnelling deep into the star's psyche. "You want to stop that movement from the popcorn to the mouth," he mission-statements at one point. "Get people to stop chewing." **NDS**



Black Or White

★★★

FROM DECEMBER 14 / CERT. 12

A

→ Inspired by a recent LA court case, this mildly involving legal drama features Kevin Costner and Octavia Spencer clashing over the custody of their granddaughter. A dogged, crabby Costner adds colour to an otherwise achingly beige family soap. It's well-acted, but too earnest to confront the racial tensions that power its plot. **SC**



Hot Pursuit

★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 12A

DVD BR

→ While the concept of a female-focused buddy comedy still feels fresh, *Hot Pursuit* turns out to be a good deal less amusing than *The Heat*. Reese Witherspoon as the staunch cop and Sofia Vergara as the talkative witness needing protection give their all, but it's a little too frantic and prone to mugging performances all round. **JW**



Heist

★★

FROM DECEMBER 28 / CERT. U

DVD

→ In a pickle when he can't pay his daughter's hospital bills, Vaughn (Jeffrey Dean Morgan) hopes robbing the casino of gangster Francis 'The Pope' Silva (Robert De Niro) will end his woes. One botched break-in and a bus-hijacking later, this bland *Speed/Inside Man* hybrid has conjured as much menace as the e-cigarettes De Niro puffs throughout. **ET**



Get Santa

★★

FROM NOW / CERT. U

DVD BR A

→ Horror director Christopher Smith takes a detour into festive family fun, with uneven results. Jim Broadbent's twinkly Santa ends up in choky after trying to liberate his lost reindeer from a London animal shelter. Jokes are of the dwarf/elf misunderstanding/fat-woman-eats-fly variety, though it's undemanding and does raise a smile here and there. **OW**



The Legend Of Barney Thomson

★★★

FROM NOW / CERT. 15

DVD A

→ Robert Carlyle's directorial debut concerns a barber who accidentally kills someone but is then suspected of serial murders. Carlyle (54) is the put-upon lead, Emma Thompson (56) his grotesque, hard-partying mum. The pitch-black comedy doesn't always land, but it's stylishly shot in acid tones and pleasingly grisly. **HOH**



Kim Newman's MOVIE DUNGEON

SMALL-SCREEN SCARES, SPILLS AND SCANDI SECRETS

ILLUSTRATION JOHN ROYLE



HIS MONTH'S TV special welcomes the wealth of vintage material now available after years spent languishing in vaults. Some would have

you believe TV serials were invented in Scandinavia in 2007, but the formula found in recent Scandi-noirs was once a speciality of BBC-TV star serial scripter Michael J. Bird, whose thrillers have British heroines imperilled in exotic but affordable holiday destinations as they dig into spooky mysteries.

Maelstrom (1985) has Tusse Silberg in Norway to claim a mystery inheritance, unnerving business with a houseful of creepy dolls, plenty of suspects, a complex backstory and slow-building suspense. Weirder still is *The Dark Side Of The Sun* (1983), set on Rhodes, with just-widowed Emily Richard haunted by her sexy ghost husband (Patrick Mower) and drawn into a Satanic Templar cult.

Even deeper in the BBC's backlist are a couple of cracking, fast-paced black-

and-white dramas. *The Count Of Monte Cristo* (1964), one of the Beeb's Sunday teatime classics, gets in all of the Dumas threads skimmed by most adaptations — the lesbian characters, the interracial relationship — and has a splendidly chilly Alan Badel exacting revenge on Michael Gough, Philip Madoc and others. *A Game Of Murder* (1966), scripted by another serial superstar, Francis Durbridge, has Gerald Harper as a copper investigating the murder by golf ball of his father, which involves many meetings in pubs and tea shops with blackmailers, good-time girls and posh pimps. It's cosy but captivating.

Kids' TV used to turn out serial drama by the yard. ITV's *Soldier And Me* (1974) is a chase drama with spies pursuing a pair of boys through quarries and farmhouses. The BBC's *Moondial* (1988) is a time-twisting fantasy set in three periods with brave modern girl Siri Neal helping ghosts face up to their woes, and Jacqueline Pearce wonderfully striking in a dual role as a nasty governess/ghost-hunter.

Spooky stuff is still a guaranteed draw. *The Green Man* (1990), a slightly protracted BBC adaptation of Kingsley Amis' pub-set ghost story, has Albert Finney as a drunken lech bothered by a killer tree and a nasty alchemist. *The Enfield Haunting* (2015) feels like a return to classic TV ghostliness as it looks at a 1977 poltergeist case. Timothy Spall and Matthew Macfadyen investigate.

Wolcott (1981) was pretty explosive stuff in its day, and still looks great (it's an early Roger Deakins cinematography credit). A black British CID officer (George Harris) copes — not always admirably — with institutional racism, police corruption, media spin, a gang war between old white villains and West Indian hustlers, and a shock ending.

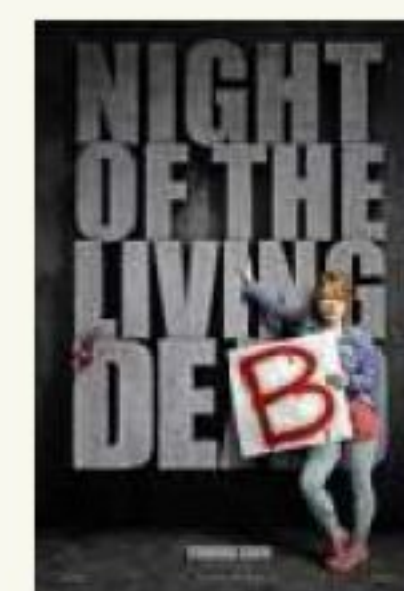
"I CONSIDER
YOUR GLOVE
THROWN
AND WILL
RETURN IT TO
YOU AROUND
A BULLET."

**THE COUNT OF
MONTE CRISTO**



PICKS OF THE MONTH

Night Of The Living Deb



→ Kyle Rankin's sweet comedy-romance is set against a zombie outbreak in a small Maine town. Deb (Maria Thayer — excellent), a tiny redheaded ditz, hooks up with the supposedly out-of-her-league Ryan (Michael Cassidy) just as everyone else is turning into a shambling cannibal. It turns out that her new beau's industrialist father (the always-welcome Ray Wise) is pretty much responsible for the disaster. Rankin keeps up the jokes and even finds new things to say about zombies.

Eyes Without A Face



→ Now luminous on Blu-ray, Georges Franju's 1960 classic is a lurid mad-scientist drama which combines surgical surrealism, hyper-graphic horror, raincoated French *policier* and Cocteau-ish magical romance. A mad scientist (Pierre Brasseur) tries to restore his disfigured daughter by transplanting stolen faces. Edith Scob drifts through corridors in a blank white mask and a nightgown, while Alida Valli stalks prey in a 2CV, accompanied by Maurice Jarre's shuddery score.

Asylum



→ Made today, Peter Robinson's gripping 1972 documentary would be an exploitative reality-TV series. Robinson's crew spent weeks observing and interacting with the residents of a commune-like London house shared by mental patients and therapists, inspired by the psychiatrist R. D. Laing. Free-associating mad mathematician David Bell — evidently brilliant but impossible — is unforgettable, while with some of the others it's fascinatingly tricky to distinguish between the patients and the doctors. Affecting true-life drama, often very funny but provocative too.

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WorldMags.net



ADVENTURES IN STREAMING

EACH ISSUE, OUR INTREPID WRITER FOLLOWS NETFLIX'S COMPUTER-CALIBRATED RECOMMENDATIONS, GOING WHEREVER THE TRAIL LEADS

WORDS SIMON CROOK

Robots



HERE ARE SO MANY robot movies on Netflix, you get the impression the algorithms have rebelled and taken over. Still, if you want a recipe for weird, try watching an artificially intelligent

movie marathon selected by artificially intelligent software. I'm fully expecting a wormhole to open up.

First stop: **Transformers: Dark Of The Moon**, round three of the Cybertron smackdown, both boring and brilliant. Opening with a moon-landing conspiracy staged as a NASA slasher movie, the first act is insane, before settling into Autobot versus Decepticon carnage, with shrapnels of plot flying out. This is great for Michael Bay bingo: Humvees, helicopters, satsuma sunsets, but most of all titanic impatience. It's less a film, more a set-piece pile-up. What, say, a Spielberg or Cuarón would milk for tension, Bay gets over in five seconds. You can almost hear him screaming in the edit suite: "Faster! More! Jeopardy's for pussies!" The CGI is phenomenal, but at 2.5 hours it's optical overload, like pouring popping-candy into your eyelids.

The bash-'em-up continues with **Real Steel**, aka the sci-fi *Rocky*. Or maybe that should be *Clanky*: Atom, the heroic boxing-bot, rises from knacker's yard to world-title fight. Shawn Levy's film gets flak for pouring sugar on the circuitry. I'd argue it's a rare victory, an emotionally charged robot movie with a father-son core forged by Hugh Jackman and Dakota Goyo. The mo-cap bouts, choreographed by Sugar Ray Leonard, are absolutely thumping. One snag: Goyo's dance routines with Atom seem beamed in from another movie. Possibly *Step Up: Roboboogaloo*.

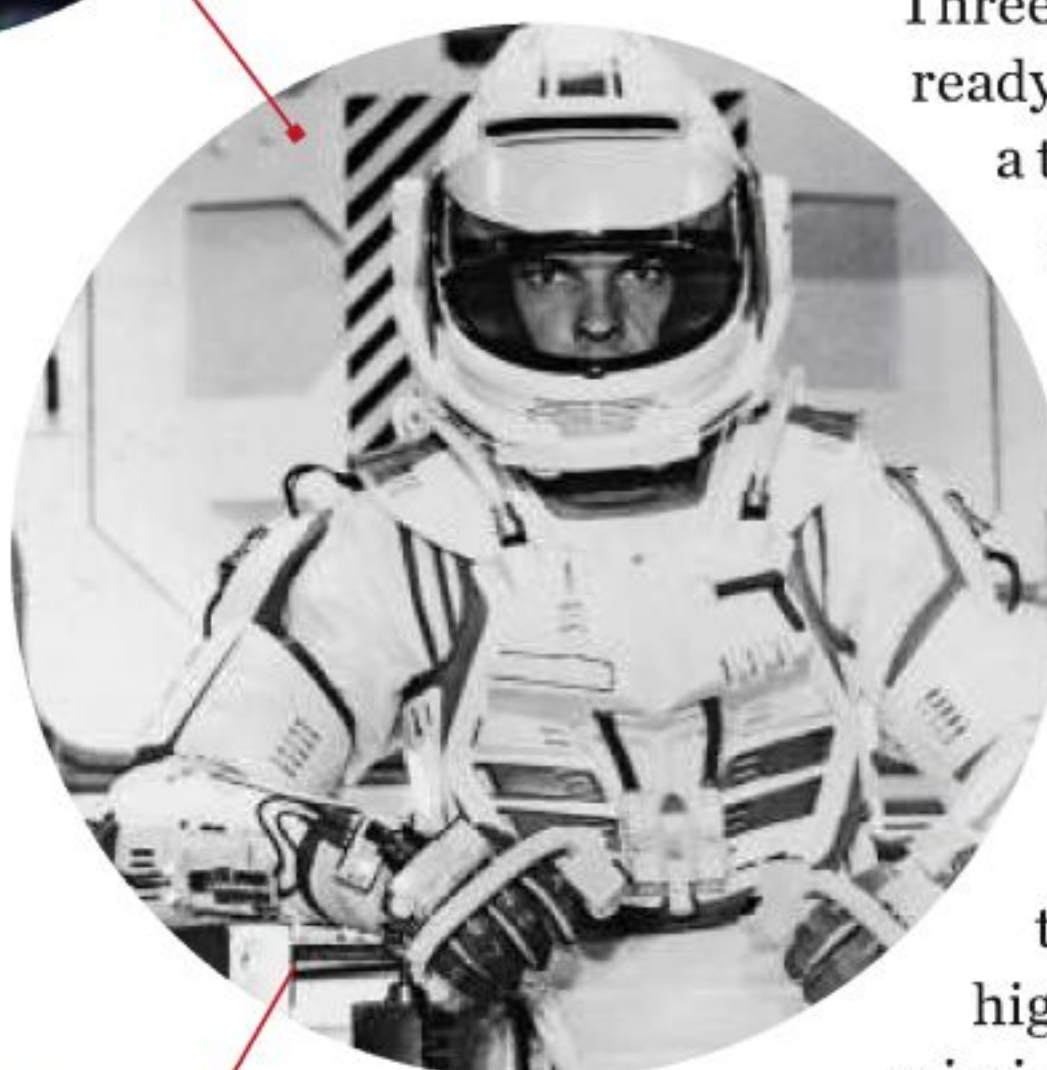
Netflix is now convinced I have a metal-walloping fetish. **Robot Jox** imagines a world where the Cold War's settled by mecha-gladiators in a gloriously literal take on the arms race — between fights, limbs are upgraded with chainsaws, lasers, Corby Trouser Press... Dismissed as "brain-damaged" by its own co-writer, Joe Haldeman, Stuart Gordon's sci-fi is, nonetheless, mesmerising as a beta-test blockbuster. Shot in 1987, this is no less than the



Poundshop *Pacific Rim*, rendered in wonky stop-motion (you could charge your phone between each punch). Futuristic flourishes include a boiler suit-only disco. Ultimately, it feels like a fan-free cult movie that's never been loved. What on Earth do you call that? Not-stalgia?

Three robot-on-robot movies in a row, and I'm ready to go ten rounds with a toaster. **Runaway**, a traditional man-versus-machine thriller, is something of a relief. Here, Tom Selleck's detective hunts homicidal 'bots commanded by Gene Simmons (the only member of Kiss who looks scarier without the make-up). Cue chase-movie thrills set in a satirical automated future of '80s breeze-block tech: fruit-machiney droids, spider-bots scuttling like evil staplers... It has big ideas and charming FX, but suffers the same pitfall of all Michael Crichton's high-concept movies — the human element is missing, replaced by schematic characters designed on an Excel spreadsheet. Remarkably, the film concludes with the longest snog in cinema history. Slurping over the entire end credits, it's so lengthy that you seriously wonder if Selleck still had his moustache at the end of it.

From robot cop to **RoboCop 3**. The algorithms are getting pedantic. By the time this arrived, RoboCop's armour had already been softened up in a Marvel cartoon series. Fred Dekker's turkey completes an action icon's fall from death machine to sigh-borg: finally, we get to see him have a nice cuddle. With Peter Weller's chin unavailable, new Murphy Robert John Burke joins a homeless kid in a fight against property-developer fascists. While it's tempting to see it as a dystopian revenge-fantasy of the UK housing market, we're talking franchise-destroyer, aimed squarely at the Happy Meal market — hence Mr. RoboCop's new flamethrower and shiny jetpack. It's a film that has its eye not on the audience but a promotional gondola in a Toys R Us aisle. The hardgore satire of Paul Verhoeven is as distant as one of Murphy's fuzzy, implanted memories. There. Survived it. And, hey, no wormho0000 *TV explodes, vortex opens, distant scream*





NEW TO STREAMING

Bedknobs And Broomsticks

★★★★★

OUT DECEMBER 4 / CERT U

A

FLIGHTS OF FANTASY



WHILE 1964'S *MARY Poppins* is today regarded as a stone-cold classic, 1971's *Bedknobs And Broomsticks* has been largely forgotten.

Both are Disney musicals that were directed by Robert Stevenson, star David Tomlinson and feature animated animals, so it's understandable that the latter is often seen as a knock-off of the former. In fact, its origins are more complex. When denied access by *Poppins* creator P. L. Travers to her stories, Walt Disney bought up as many similar tales as he could. These included Mary Norton's 1940s children's books

David Tomlinson, Angela Lansbury and their wards savour the strangeness of the Isle of Naboombu.

The Magic Bed-Knob; Or, How To Become A Witch In Ten Easy Lessons and *Bonfires And Broomsticks*. Before an adaptation could gain traction, *Mary Poppins* came back on the agenda, and it was only after Walt's death that *Bedknobs And Broomsticks* finally hit the screen.

Hopefully the movie's imminent arrival on Amazon Prime will result in more families discovering it. Despite the dire original tagline ("You'll be beWITCHED! You'll be beDAZZLED"), it fizzles with invention. The year is 1941 and Angela Lansbury is wannabe witch Eglantine Price, complete with broomstick and black cat named Cosmic Creepers. She's determined to use magic to aid the war effort, and her search for a spell leads her to a group of kids and a fraudulent enchanter (Tomlinson).

It's a cobweb-thin plot, boosted by a brace of charming performances, some A-grade songs (*Portobello Road* is the best Disney musical number to feature Bruce Forsyth and a pair of prostitutes) and two barnstorming set-pieces. The first is a riff that sees our heroes travel to the Isle of Naboombu, where cartoon animals rule. And, apparently, spend most of their time playing football: the carnivores-versus-herbivores dust-up that ensues makes Maradona seem well behaved. But even that is eclipsed by the movie's loony climax, in which Nazi commandos are booted out of Britain by magical suits of armour. Spruced up by Oscar-winning visual effects, the sequence is madcap, possibly just plain mad, and weirdly stirring. Reboot? **NICK DE SEMLYEN**

ALSO STREAMING



TRANSPARENT: SEASON 2

A

Amazon Studios' most lauded original series, *Transparent* follows an LA dad who realises he's transgender. Season 2 will feature a wedding, an ultrasound and darker storylines. FROM DECEMBER, CERT. 15



THE RIDICULOUS 6

N

Adam Sandler's Western spoof, the first in a four-film deal with Netflix, could be a return to form. Then again, judging by the trailer, it could be *Unforgiven* with the funny bits taken out. FROM DECEMBER 11, CERT. TBC



BIG HERO 6

SM

Featuring the most iconic movie robot of recent times (sorry, Chappie) and a fistbump that's still being imitated in the *Empire* office, this Disney sci-fi is a heck of a lot of fun. Balalalalalala. FROM DECEMBER 25, CERT. PG



ABOUT A BOY

A

Nicholas Hoult, currently to be seen snorting cocaine and weeing on James Corden in *Kill Your Friends*, got his break in this 2002 comedy, as a 12-year-old being mentored by a rich jerk. FROM DECEMBER 1, CERT. 12



FOCUS

SM

Will Smith and Margot Robbie will be wreaking mayhem in next year's *Suicide Squad*, but this is where they first went bad. Chemistry crackles as the con artists use sleight-of-hand to outwit their marks — and each other. FROM DECEMBER 11, CERT. 15



WILD TALES

A

Argentine director Damián Szifron is moving into big-budget filmmaking with *The Six Billion Dollar Man* (though we doubt the budget will be *that* big). His witty anthology film shows why he's shot into the big league. FROM DECEMBER 15, CERT. 15



MONSTERS: DARK CONTINENT

N

While Gareth Edwards' *Monsters* was a romantic road trip, Tom Green's gung-ho sequel pits a squad of US troops against insurgents, creatures and sand. It gets everywhere. FROM DECEMBER 31, CERT. 15

THE CRIB SHEET

FRANKENSTEIN FILMS

PREP FOR *VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN* WITH THIS RECAP OF FOUR MAD-PROFESSOR CLASSICS

WORDS KIM NEWMAN



FILM GUIDE

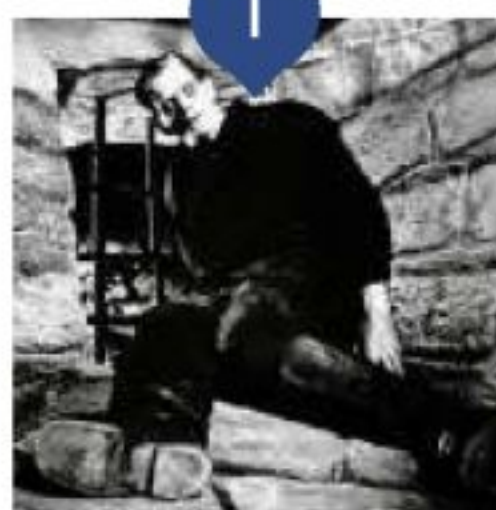
NUTS AND BOLTS

MONSTER

SHOCK

WHERE IT ALL GOES WRONG

SEQUELS AND PARODIES



FRANKENSTEIN
(1931)

Henry Frankenstein (Colin Clive) creates a Monster (Boris Karloff).

Tall, flat-headed, facially scarred, lank-haired, heavy eyelids, electric terminals in neck, clod-hopping boots. Seemingly dies in a burning mill.

The Monster learns the unhappy lesson that little girls don't float.

Hunchbacked minion Fritz (Dwight Frye) drops the normal brain and steals the abnormal one... then later teaches the Monster a lesson in cruelty by whipping him to the point where he breaks his shackles and runs rampage.

SEQUELS: *The Bride Of Frankenstein* (with Clive and Karloff) and *Son Of Frankenstein* (with Karloff). Then: *The Ghost Of Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein Meets The Wolf Man*, *House Of Frankenstein*, *House Of Dracula*.

PARODIES: *Abbott And Costello Meet Frankenstein*, *The Munsters*, *Young Frankenstein*.



THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN
(1957)

Victor Frankenstein (Peter Cushing) creates a Creature (Christopher Lee).

The body of a hanged highwayman, the brain of a professor, more scars than face. Dies falling into an acid bath, leaving Victor to take the blame for all his murders.

The Creature lurches up to the camera and pulls off his bandages to show his hideous face.

Assistant Paul (Robert Urquhart) keeps sabotaging Victor's work, struggling with him so he drops and damages the genius brain. Victor also strays from the path of science by having the Creature get rid of his pregnant maid.

SEQUELS: *The Revenge Of Frankenstein*, *The Evil Of Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein Created Woman*, *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed* and *Frankenstein And The Monster From Hell* (all with Cushing).

PARODIES: *Carry On Screaming*, *The Horror Of Frankenstein*.



I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN
(1957)

Professor Frankenstein (Whit Bissell), a descendent of the original scientist, assembles the remains of kids killed in a hot-rod crash into a teenage Monster (Gary Conway).

Probably the most hideous screen Frankenstein's Monster of all — scarred all over, one huge bulging eye, random tufts of hair, exposed goofy teeth, mashed Morlock nose.

The black-and-white film suddenly turns full-colour in the climax, when the Monster tosses Frankenstein into an alligator pit and electrocutes himself on laboratory equipment.

Naturally, an adolescent Frankenstein's Monster suffers from a dreadful skin condition which makes him sullen and rebellious.

SEQUEL: In the postmodern follow-up *How To Make A Monster*, Conway returns as an actor cast as the Teenage Monster. Hypnotised by an evil make-up man, he goes on a tear along with an actor playing the title fiend from *I Was A Teenage Werewolf*.



FLESH FOR FRANKENSTEIN
(1973)

Baron Frankenstein (Udo Kier) creates perfect specimens of the Serbian Master Race, male and female Creatures (Srdjan Zelenovic, Dalila DiLazzaro).

Tall, beautiful, sutured-together, discreetly bandaged.

The baron gets impaled on a long pole. It spears out a bloody organ that might be his liver... in 3D.

With the intent of using his monsters to spawn a master race, the baron plans to give the male the brain of a super-stud (Joe Dallesandro) but beheads an impotent wannabe monk by mistake. Everyone is then ripped to pieces.

SEQUELS: The same creative team made *Blood For Dracula* (not in 3D) next. Many years on, *I, Frankenstein* tried another 3D Frankenstein saga, but few deemed it worthy.

PARODIES: Frankly, it's hard to parody something as extreme as this.



Shane



1953 / FROM NOW / CERT. PG

BR

COWBOYS AND ALANS



SHANE IS ARGUABLY the most seminal Western ever made. Ever noticed how *Unforgiven* mirrors its violent showdown in a saloon? And who

is *Mad Max* but a leather-clad Shane, returning to the desert when the day is won? Sergio Leone was obsessed with Alan Ladd's taciturn archetype, the sins of the past filling his saddlebags. Yet this classic has much more on its mind than the folk heroics of Ladd's rootless gunfighter, dispensing justice to unsporting cattlemen. Revisiting the film now, the moral lines have blurred. It has grown unsettling.

North-west Wyoming's glorious Grand Teton mountains are suddenly cloudy and damp, all the costumes drably functional and accurate to 1890. Only Victor Young's moony score betrays any studio primping. There

is much more talk than action.

Listen out — barely ten gunshots can be heard in the entire film. Each is as jarring as a slap. Flint-eyed director George Stevens was a war veteran and as his son, George Stevens Jr., reveals on this Blu-ray's commentary, his father was appalled by how Westerns used "six-guns like guitars". Stevens Sr. had seen what a bullet could do to a man, "what a weapon meant".

Concepts of machismo ricochet back and forth. Unsure that his father is equipped for the fight, farmer's son Joey (Brandon De Wilde) might as well have dreamt Shane into being. "Did you think you were going to come in here and drink with the men?" one lousy cowpoke asks a farmer daring to brave the bar. But it is the gunmen who are being consigned to history; America belongs to the settlers.

Joey too is fixated on guns, and you wonder if idolising Shane is healthy. He may try to assimilate, to eat pie and go to the dance, but the family table will never truly be set for Shane. Those shared glances tell you that Jean Arthur, as Joey's mother, can see a bad boy. "A man has to be what he is," he sighs as he heads out to settle things. Sick pups that we are, we feel the same eagerness as Joey, who dashes after him to witness a gunfight. **IAN NATHAN**

Alan Ladd and equine co-star reflect on the misery of life in 1890s Wyoming.

LIKE
THIS,
WATCH
THIS



STEEL DAWN

1987

A spin on *Shane*, this Patrick Swayze vehicle sees him protecting post-apocalyptic settlers. See also: lousy Van Damme film *Nowhere To Run*.

ALSO OUT



Belleville Rendez-vous

★★★★

2003 / FROM NOVEMBER 30 / CERT. 12 DVD

→ Sylvain Chomet's defiantly French 'toon is a daffy treat. When a Tour de France champion is kidnapped by heavies, his gran and lazy dog team up with a trio of jazz singers to get him back. Playing to kids and adults alike, it channels Jacques Tati and Disney but is a true original: bonkers, charming and touchingly innocent. **IF**



Stop Making Sense

★★★★★

1984 / FROM NOW / CERT. E

DVD BR

→ Jonathan Demme's spellbinding concert film doesn't merely capture Talking Heads in their pomp — it is a majestic marriage of performance and cinema. Beginning with wizardly lead singer David Byrne alone with a boombox, the set is slowly assembled around him song by song. On Blu-ray, it looks and sounds like another planet. **IN**



The Fallen Idol

★★★★

1948 / FROM NOW / CERT. PG

DVD BR

→ The Carol Reed/Graham Greene classic that preceded *The Third Man* is an entirely different beast, creating a Gordian knot of Hitchcockian wrong-man tension as Ralph Richardson's kindly embassy butler is accused of killing his wife. Clothed in both moral and visual greys (much sharpened on Blu-ray), it's the *Atonement* of its day. **IN**

“A ludicrously violent, fantastically loopy action classic.”

Hard Boiled

1992 / OUT NOW / CERT. 18

DVD N

BULLET TIME



BACK IN 1992, *EMPIRE*'S REVIEW

slightly over-enthusiastically proclaimed *Hard Boiled* to be “more exciting than a dozen *Die Hards*”. Two decades on, we can confirm that, adjusted for inflation, it's more exciting than 84 *A Good Day To Die Hards*.

John Woo's bird-stuffed bullet ballet has been imitated by Hollywood, Kowloon, even Woo himself. It spawned a video-game sequel, *Stranglehold*. But there's only one *Hard Boiled*: a vastly stylish, ludicrously violent, fantastically loopy action classic in which a baby saves the day by peeing on a cop's flaming trousers.

For all its iconic moments and images, it was built on the fly. After releasing his equally masterful *The Killer* in 1989, Woo began getting offers from US studios. He decided to make one last film in Hong Kong, this time with a policeman hero every bit as badass as *The Killer*'s assassin, and played by the same star: Chow Yun-Fat. Hence Inspector ‘Tequila’ Yuen, a lawman with inexhaustible ammo, a knack for swinging on ropes and a side-job playing jazz clarinet in a bar — essentially an unlikely hybrid of Arnie, Errol Flynn and Jools Holland. The film was set to pit Tequila against a psychopath (Tony Leung) bent on poisoning babies. But after a couple of weeks, Woo shut the shoot down. A month later, the cameras rolled again, this time with a radically different plot. Leung was now Alan, a cop deep undercover with the Triads, he and Tequila destined to become brothers-in-sidearms. From then on, Woo winged it, throwing in new characters and subplots (including a cameo from himself as a bartender) as he went along.

1 Alan (Tony Leung) in a rare shot that features only two guns.

2 Tequila (Chow Yun-Fat) with fellow cop/girlfriend Teresa (Teresa Mo).

3 Tequila executes a treehouse takedown.



WORDS

NICK DE SEMLYEN

But for all the hypnotic, athletic violence — and its bodycount of 307 might be untopped by any movie that doesn't feature an actual battle — there's more to *Hard Boiled* than double-fisted law-enforcement. Woo, who began his career making comedies, keeps his policier light. There's that urinating infant, the perfect tension-deflator. There's the astonishing sight of Chow Yun-Fat singing a line from Lionel Ritchie's *Hello*. And if you watch the dubbed version, you get some bonus unintentional comedy in the form of lines such as, “I've got more hostages than you've had hot dinners!”

In 1976, Woo also made a Chinese opera, and the through-line is clear. *Hard Boiled* is far less interested in the mechanics of how the police force or Triads operate than in the concepts of brotherhood, betrayal and honour. There's a mythic quality to Tequila (who's capable of shooting a bullet from seven feet away, a nod to Jean-Pierre Melville's *Le Cercle Rouge*) and Alan (who makes an origami crane for each of his victims) that sets this aside from any other buddy-cop movie. As OTT as its mayhem gets, it remains soulful, languid, even poetic.

We never got a second shot of Tequila. Lured to Hollywood, Woo worked with Van Damme, Travolta and Affleck, before returning to China to mount expensive historical epics. But the influence of his Hong Kong swansong lives on — notably in Gareth Evans' *Raid* films, which named a character after honourable brute Mad Dog. And excitement started building when Woo announced at Cannes this year that he was returning to the cops-and-crims genre with *Manhunt*. With the master of gun-fu back after a lengthy break, somebody better warn the locals to expect some noise.

REVIEW

RE-RELEASES

153

Red Sun

1971

★★★



FROM NOW

CERT. 15

BR

→ Revenge Western that's also an Eastern: joining Charles Bronson's outlaw is Toshiro Mifune. Cowboys and samurai promise cult gold, but the chemistry's as stodgy as barbecued sushi. Also firing blanks: Terence Young's unusually blunt direction. Still, Tarantino adores it. Spot the John Landis cameo, win 5p.

The Ladykillers

1955

★★★★★



FROM NOW

CERT. U

DVD BR

→ Wily old biddy wrecks a heist. A merry comedy of emasculation, it's easy to forget just how macabre Ealing's classic is, plunging into visual murk as the laughter blackens. Alec Guinness' coffin-toothed Nosferatu is a truly unctuous creation, but the film belongs to Katie Johnson: "a beam of light in a world of threat", as Terry Gilliam says in his ace intro.

A Sense Of Freedom

★★★★★

1979



FROM NOW

CERT. 18

DVD

→ On the first day of his life sentence, Glasgow Mob-lord Jimmy Boyle *punched out the governor*. This hard-eyed, unflinching biopic earned John Mackenzie his *Long Good Friday* gig and features the frighteningly feral David Hayman: less a performance, more a primal growl of nihilistic defiance. Unsung and savage, it makes *Scum* look like a picnic.

Deep Red

1975

★★★★★



FROM

DECEMBER 7

CERT. 18

BR

→ Dario Argento's marrghsterpiece: a lurid *giallo* of carving camerawork, exquisite kills and (get this) a coherent plot. Creepy lullabies and dead-eyed dolls enhance the unease: the climax is a ticket to Freudian hell. This three-disc limited edition (two cuts, artwork, Goblin CD) is so complete, Argento probably delivers it personally in a squeaky leather glove.

Basil The Great Mouse Detective

1986

★★★



FROM NOW

CERT. U

BR

→ Here's a mystery: why didn't Disney revive one of their smartest creations? Did Mickey order a hit on Basil? The rodent-Holmes concept is funny, sharply plotted and brilliantly voiced: Vincent Price chews every syllable as furry Moriarty, Ratigan. Pioneering CGI, too: the Big Ben cog-chase saw animation's future, and still thrills.

Charlie Chan & The Curse Of The Dragon Queen

1981

★★



FROM NOW

CERT. PG

DVD BR

→ This actually happened: Peter Ustinov, as Oriental as a custard cream, in a shrill, slapstick spoof. The killer favours novelty deaths (exploding saxophone!). The comedy operates on the mistaken principle that if they shout the jokes, the viewer will laugh louder. With Michelle Pfeiffer, gurning through an early bimbo role. Yes, he Chan? No. No, he Chan't.

Leaving Las Vegas

1995

★★★★★



FROM

DECEMBER 7

CERT. 18

BR

→ Nic Cage and Elisabeth Shue form a desperate romance in Sin City, clinging onto love like a sinking life-raft. Mike Figgis' gruelling, seedy, feel-crap tale of lost souls is all tunnel, no light, but is nonetheless grimly mesmerising. Cage's suicidal alcoholic spirited an Oscar. Don't, whatever you do, attempt the drinking game.

The Trip

1967

★★★



FROM

NOVEMBER 30

CERT. 18

BR

→ Forewarning "a most unusual motion-picture experience", Roger Corman's brain-fryer kicks Peter Fonda down an LSD rabbit-hole. As Fonda loses the plot, Corman trips out in an orgy of spirograph FX and hedonistic humping. Camp now, but a freaky acid-era artefact. Features the line, "That's the sun in my hands!" as Fonda fondles, er, an orange.

Edward Scissorhands

1990

★★★★★



FROM

NOVEMBER 30

CERT. 12

BR

→ Tim Burton's masterwork is the closest he's come to autobiography. Behind Johnny Depp's bondage-goth outfit (think Robert Smith meets Swiss Army Knife) are the pains of Burton's outsider adolescence. The film, a suburban fairy tale with added topiary, is 25 years old now and so visually unique it's practically its own subgenre: pastel gothic.



Halo 5: Guardians



OUT NOW / XBOX ONE

CELEBRITY MASTER CHIEF



S4 OWNERS, LOOK away now: Microsoft's Christmas big gun has arrived, and is set to render the Xbox One fraternity insufferable.

Halo 5: Guardians is astonishing both to behold and to play and, with due respect to *Call Of Duty: Black Ops III* and *Destiny*, can claim to be the best first-person shooter money can buy.

Halo games have always been epic, but the fifth core release — and the first built for the Xbox One — hits new heights of sweeping bombast. It looks incredible, featuring some amazingly detailed alien environments, and counters past criticisms that the franchise can tend towards the formulaic. This time around,

you spend less time playing as Master Chief than as Jameson Locke, leader of a Spartan fireteam called Osiris. Windows Phone owners may be perturbed to learn that the artificial intelligence Cortana, who has apparently gone rogue, is the main villain. Master Chief heads off to track her down, while Osiris embarks on various universe-saving missions which include countering Master Chief and his team.

The single-player campaign is vastly more varied than in previous games: you even find the odd sequence that approximates platforming. There are some great new vehicles to master along with the old favourites, and some decent boss battles. Early on, the Prometheans are the main enemy, which is good, since they have much better weapons than the Covenant, who still feature. The fact you're always part of a fireteam means that your mates can jump in cooperatively, and even AI-controlled team-mates can revive you — for once they actually contribute, rather than standing around like lemons.

Online, *Halo 5: Guardians* also nails it. Arena includes classic modes like Capture The Flag and Slayer — which is essentially Team Deathmatch — and adds Breakout, which gives you a single life per round, while Warzone plunges you into a full-on 12v12 battlefield situation. Clever tweaks and improved Spartan manoeuvrability add extra freshness.

You will struggle to find a slicker game than *Halo 5: Guardians*, yet it is far from soulless. While it's the most convincing standard-bearer yet for the new generation of consoles, it's also thoroughly absorbing and adrenaline-inducing to play. It's the strongest case yet for the undecided to buy Xbox Ones this Christmas. **STEVE BOXER**



DOWNWELL iOS/ANDROID

A boy (with a pair of deadly gun boots) falls down a well inhabited by retro-style monsters. Cue a fiendishly addictive platformer with gorgeous Spectrum-era styling. Brutally hard, but slip your toes into some powered-up footwear and you won't be able to put it down.



SNIPER X WITH JASON STATHAM iOS/ANDROID

What more could anyone ask for than The Stath teaching them how to become an elite sniper as increasingly ferocious foes attack? Fewer in-app cash-grabs and more involving gameplay would be a start.

FRANCHISE EVOLUTION



James Bond



JAMES BOND 007 (1983)

Four films rolled into one game populated by stick men shooting lines. Cutting edge on the Atari 2600.



GOLDFINGER (1986)

Entirely text-based spy game. You expect me to type? No, Mr. Bond, I expect you to die!



GOLDENEYE: 007 (1997)

One of the greatest multiplayer games ever made. If you played as Oddjob, you're going to hell.



007 RACING (2000)

The DB5, the Esprit, even the Z8 — Bond's garage is yours to plunder, race and write off.



007 LEGENDS (2012)

Features all previous Bonds as Craig-era flashbacks, making a nonsense of the entire reboot chronology.

THOMAS NEWMAN

THE 12-TIME OSCAR-NOMINATED COMPOSER ON HIS SIGNATURE SCORES

WORDS CHRIS HEWITT

1 The Lost Boys (1987)

I most remember writing the carousel piece (*To The Shock Of Miss Louise*), because there was a boardwalk with rides that needed an eerie vampiric vibe to it. Beyond that, I don't have much memory of what I was trying to do!

2 The Player (1992)

I was hired by (Robert) Altman because it was about Hollywood and I'm part of a musical Hollywood family. (*His father is All About Eve* composer Alfred Newman, his cousin Randy Newman.) There was a moment in post when I thought I might be let go. A real growing-up experience.

3 The Shawshank Redemption (1994)

It was such a good movie with not a stitch of music in it. I remember freaking out: "How can I not make it less good?" There's a mordant humour in the staccato pieces.

4 American Beauty (1999)

The opening (*Dead Already*) was the last piece I wrote. I had written 15 or 16 pieces, but could always tell Sam Mendes wasn't pleased. I went to the piano tune for the plastic-bag scene, took that C minor/F major relationship and put it into a marimba sound.

5 Road To Perdition (2002)

Sam Mendes rejected the uilleann pipes for a long time. He didn't want to be ethnic at all, with the Irish backstory.

Above: Daniel Craig is back as Bond.

Below: Composer Thomas Newman. *Spectre*, he says, was "demanding".

But the tune I'd written for the opening bike ride worked so beautifully with that instrument.

6 Finding Nemo (2003)

It was so hard. I remember my cousin Randy saying, "Look at the next ten minutes. Don't look at the whole movie because you'll fall over."

7 Lemony Snicket's A Series Of Unfortunate Events (2004)

I like that score a lot. It's wide-ranging in its style and its sense of fun and irony. My kids were young and they loved the books, and that may have been a factor.

8 The Good German (2006)

Steven Soderbergh temped it with a lot of Max Steiner, which was a little terrifying. You hope you can take that vocabulary and create newness, not ape something.

9 Bridge Of Spies (2015)

It was very daunting. John Williams (*whom Newman replaced*) has been a friend of my family for so long. Steven Spielberg said, "I'm not interested in you trying to write a John Williams score." I took that to heart.

10 Spectre (2015)

Trying to live up to the standards of what a James Bond experience is is demanding. The challenge in *Spectre*, and *Skyfall*, was how to do it in a way that felt original. Sam had an awful lot of opinions about that... We'd carve our way, moment by moment.

EMPIRE PLAYLIST



Zombies

1 Zombi Goblin

Dawn Of The Dead (1978)

2 The Man Comes Around

Johnny Cash *Dawn Of The Dead* (2004)

3 Isolated System Muse

World War Z

4 M1 A1 Gorillaz Sample

from *Day Of The Dead*

5 Thriller Michael Jackson

Thriller

6 Main Title Theme Song

(UNKLE remix) Bear McCreary *The Walking Dead*

7 For Whom The Bell Tolls

Metallica *Zombieland*

8 The Death Of Mum The

Evolved *Braindead*

9 In The House — In

A Heartbeat John Murphy *28 Weeks Later*

10 Pet Sematary Ramones

Pet Sematary

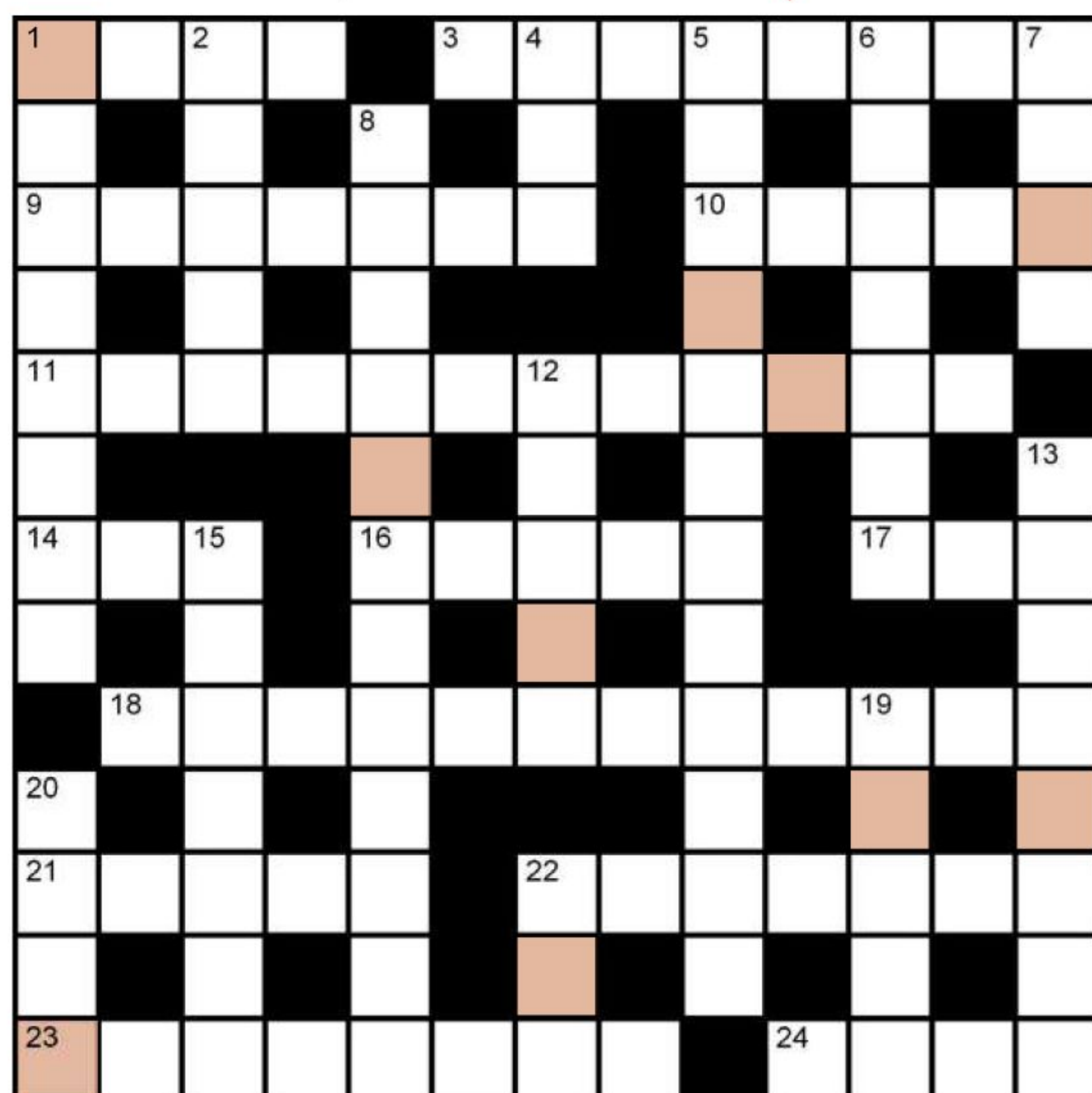
11 Tonight (We'll Make Love

Until We Die) SSQ *Return Of The Living Dead*

12 Don't Stop Me Now Queen

Shaun Of The Dead

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ACROSS

- 1 Galatic Order returned in *Star Wars: Episode VI* (4)
 3 Film's highest-grossing musical (5,3)
 9 Culture held in esteem by Ally Sheedy and Radha Mitchell? (4,3)
 10 In which Maggie Cheung does more methadone than Method? (5)
 11 1981 sword-and-sorcery fantasy starring Ralph Richardson (12)
 14 For which Spike Jonze gained a 2014 Oscar for Best Original Screenplay (3)
 16 Stephen Dorff action movie, formerly known as *Riders* (5)
 17 Number of faces of January required for a Kirsten Dunst movie (3)
 18 He was Oscar-nominated for his supporting role in *Birdman* (6,6)
 21 Christopher who was Doc Brown in *Back To The Future* (5)
 22 Christian drama that topped the US box office in September 2015 (3,4)
 23 Could be Wes, could be Gillian (8)
 24 *The Wrath Of* — (Star Trek II) (4)

DOWN

- 1 Director whose films include *Red Rock West* and *The Last Seduction* (4,4)
 2 "Get 'touched' by an angel" ran the tagline (5)
 4 Whoopi Goldberg provided the sisterly kind (3)
 5 Documentary filmmaker who made *Bowling For Columbine* (7,5)
 6 Legendary sex symbol whose autobiography was titled *Goodness Had Nothing To Do With It* (3,4)
 7 Thousand-day queen portrayed by Genevieve Bujold (4)
 8 Adrian Lyne's stairway to heaven? (6,6)
 12 1994, Bullock, a bomb and a bus, remember? (5)
 13 — *With A Horn* (aka — *Of Music*) Kirk Douglas' jazz jaunt (5,3)
 15 Dr F. Dore turns to idol Robert (7)
 19 — *And Nail* (Michael Madsen, Vinnie Jones) (5)
 20 Jessica amid aerial ballet scene? (4)
 22 *Face/Off* action director John (3)

Competition ends **December 28**

HOW TO ENTER Take the letters from each coloured square and rearrange them to form the name of an actor, actress, director or character. Text 'EMPIRE' to 83070, followed by your answer, name and address (with a space between each element of your message!). Texts cost 50p plus standard operator costs. Lines close at midnight, December 28. Winners are selected at random. See below for terms and conditions.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS: One entry per person. Texts cost 50p + standard network rate. Ask the bill payer's permission before entering. Entries must be received before December 29 or will not be valid (but the cost of the text may still be charged). One winner will be selected at random. The model of the TV and Blu-ray may vary. Competition promoted by Bauer Consumer Media Limited t/a Empire ("Empire"). Empire's choice of winner is final and no correspondence will be entered into in this regard. The winner will be notified, by phone (on the number the text was sent), between seven and ten days after the competition ends. Empire will call the winner a maximum of three times and leave one message. If the winner does not answer the phone or respond to the message within 14 days of the competition's end, Empire will select another winner and the original winner will not win a prize. Entrants must be over 18, resident in the UK and not be employed by Empire. The prize is non-negotiable with no cash alternative. Empire is not responsible for late delivery or unsatisfactory quality of the prize. Entrants agree to the collection of their personal data in accordance with Empire's privacy policy: <http://www.bauerdatapromise.co.uk/>. Winner's personal details will be given to prize provider to arrange delivery of the prize. Bauer reserves the right to amend or cancel these terms or any aspect of the competition (including the prize) at any time if required for reasons beyond its control. Any questions, please email empire@bauermedia.co.uk. Complaints will not be considered if made more than 30 days after the competition ends. Winner's details available on request (after the competition ends) by emailing empire@bauermedia.co.uk. For full Ts&Cs see <http://www.bauerlegal.co.uk/competition-terms.html>.

WIN!



FROM THE MAKERS OF *WHIPLASH* AND *THE PURGE* comes *The Gift*, which wowed critics on its theatrical release and is a must-see on the small screen if, for some unfeasible reason, you missed it first time around. Starring (not to mention written and directed by) *Warrior's* Joel Edgerton, this tense psychological thriller sees married couple Simon (Jason Bateman) and Robyn (Rebecca Hall) unravel when Simon's childhood friend Gordo (Edgerton) shows up with a deeply unsettling secret to share. Full of twists and turns, Edgerton's gripping directorial debut is out on digital HD on November 30 and DVD and Blu-ray on December 7 — and to celebrate we've got a swanky 48" HDTV, a copy of the film on Blu-ray and a Blu-ray player to play it on for one lucky winner. Don't say we never 'give' you anything... To be in with a chance of getting your hands on the booty, complete the crossword to the left, solve the anagram and text us your answer.

THE GIFT IS OUT ON DIGITAL HD ON NOVEMBER 30 AND DVD AND BLU-RAY ON DECEMBER 7.

DECEMBER ANSWERS ACROSS 1 Iron, 3 Catwoman, 9 The Heat, 10 Elmer, 11 Eileen Atkins, 13 Ultron, 15 O'Toole, 17 Kenneth Anger, 20 Eddie, 21 Top Five, 22 Guess Who, 23 Iris.
DOWN 1 In The Cut, 2 O'Neal, 4 Ant-Man, 5 Wreck-It Ralph, 6 Memento, 7 Nora, 8 We're No Angels, 12 Fearless, 14 The Edge, 16 Stitch, 18 Grier, 19 Pegg. **ANAGRAM WILL SMITH**

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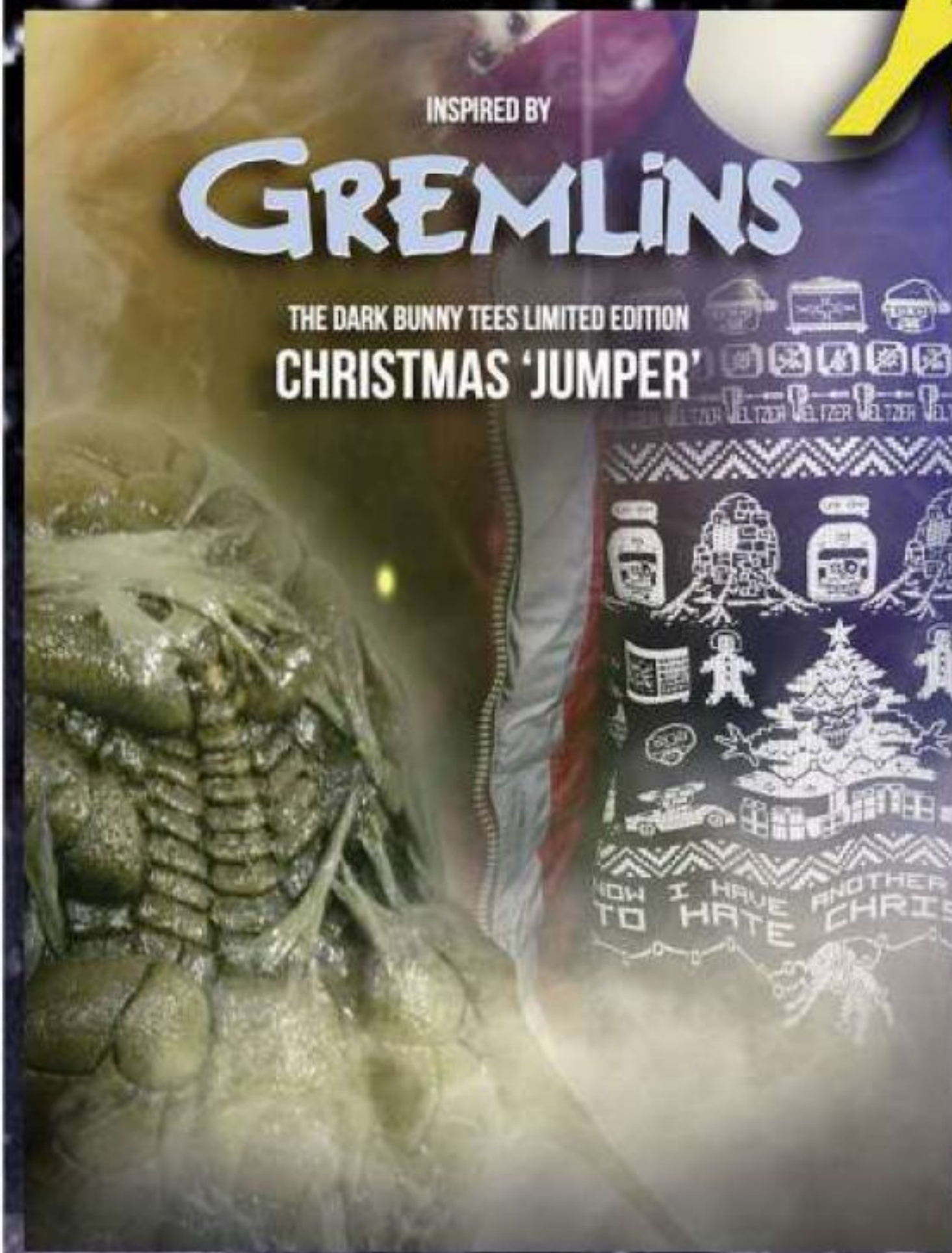
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COMMENT



BENEDICT PLUMBERBATCH

I read the Benedict Cumberbatch piece in the last issue with great interest. Between *Hamlet*, *Sherlock*, *Doctor Strange*, *Black Mass* and playing Richard III, he truly is the busiest man in show business. However, if he has space free between 9:30am and 1:30pm on the morning of Thursday December 17, I'd like to invite him round to re-grout my bath. I'll be out watching *The Force Awakens*, I'll leave the key under the flowerpot.

JOEL SMITH, VIA EMAIL

We've just checked with him, he's already done it.



Love the new character posters for *The Force Awakens*, but why does everyone look like they're having an eye exam?

SONYA BIRD (@SAWSONG)



FINDING DORY? FOUND IT.
PETER NORTHEGE, FACEBOOK

New Lisbeth Salander Film.
No Rooney Mara.
No Daniel Craig.
No David Fincher.
No watch.

CONNOR WALSH, @CONORWALSHY

LETTER of the MONTH



WELLES I NEVER

I'm a long-time reader of *Empire*, and can prove it! I was reading your review of *Sky Captain And The World Of Tomorrow*, of which I'm a big fan, and I couldn't help but notice a reference you may have missed. At the start when Polly sees killer robots walking towards her she says, "One hundred yards away... 50," which is a line from the Orson Welles' *War Of The Worlds* radio play. How do I know it's in *War Of The Worlds*? Because I still have the tape you gave me free with Issue 70! Or was it 71? I think it had this funny-looking guy called Jim Carrey on the front. Thanks for the years of reading and maybe give out more audiobooks. On digital or whatever kids use nowadays.

ED REED, BRISTOL

It was Issue 71 and you're welcome. Although we prefer to think of it as a riff on Bill Paxton's legendary performance in *Aliens*.
"Five metres, man. Four. What the hell?"

Picture house

Empire's star letter wins a Picturehouse Membership, plus one for a friend! Valid for one year at 23 Picturehouse Cinemas across the UK, including the brand-new Picturehouse Central in London's West End, each membership comes pre-loaded with four free tickets, and gets you access to priority booking and exclusive discounts on everything in the cinema. When you write to us, please ensure you include your full contact details so we can arrange delivery of your prize.



HAMM TAKES HOME THE BACON

In your Top Ten *Star Wars* money makers I couldn't help but notice you've missed off John Ratzenberger (*The Empire Strikes Back*). Thanks to his involvement with Pixar he has domestic box office figures just over the \$5 billion mark.

CRAIG GORHAM, VIA EMAIL

Yes, yes, very good. But with a minute of screen time we're not entirely sure Major Derlin should be in the running.



DEFACING DANIEL

I have a large stack of old issues, and one evening my wife asked if she could cut them up to create something new.

She did, and the result was a hidden Daniel Radcliffe poem in the Pint Of Milk section. It reads as follows:

My life is better than Nutella, man.
That was my last attempt
to rap weird shit
and care about my hairy arse!

I once published poems under the pen name Jacob Gershon.

Daredevil I was.

Thank you for giving an opportunity for Daniel Radcliffe to truly express himself.

ELIAS ELIOT, COPENHAGEN, DENMARK

We're not saying you should get out of the house, but you've seen John Doe's notebooks in *Seven*, right?



EMPIRE CLASSIC SCENE

Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope

**“THIS IS THE WEAPON
OF A JEDI KNIGHT.”**

SETTING THE SCENE If *Star Wars* is the story of the Skywalker family, then this is perhaps the key scene in the saga. Luke Skywalker learns of his heritage and, like a galactic spin-off of the *Antiques Roadshow*, is given the most important of family heirlooms — his father’s lightsaber. Expect this moment to be riffed on in *The Force Awakens*. George Lucas also delivers a poetic description of the Force, before those pesky midi-chlorians came and mucked it all up.

INT. KENOBI’S DWELLING
Luke (Mark Hamill) sits in a corner repairing C-3PO (Anthony Daniels), as Obi-Wan Kenobi (Alec Guinness) sits beside him.

Luke: No, my father didn’t fight in the wars. He was a navigator on a spice freighter.

Obi-Wan: That’s what your uncle told you. He didn’t hold with your father’s ideals. Thought he should have stayed here and not gotten involved.

Luke: You fought in the Clone Wars?

Obi-Wan: Yes, I was once a Jedi Knight, the same as your father.

Luke: I wish I’d known him.

Obi-Wan: He was the best star-pilot in the galaxy, and a cunning warrior. I understand you’ve become quite a good pilot yourself. And he was a good friend. Which reminds me...

He gets up and walks across to a chest.

Obi-Wan: I have something here for you. Your father wanted you to have this when you were old enough, but your uncle wouldn’t allow it. He feared you might follow old Obi-Wan on some damned-fool idealistic crusade like your father did.

He removes a metal object from the chest.

C-3PO: Sir, if you’ll not be needing me, I’ll close down for a while.

Luke: Sure, go ahead.

The droid goes still. Luke looks at what Obi-Wan is holding with interest.

Luke: What is it?

Obi-Wan: It’s your father’s lightsaber. This is the weapon of a Jedi Knight. Not as clumsy or random as a blaster.

Luke takes it and activates a button on the handle. A beam of bright energy shoots out about four feet.

Obi-Wan: An elegant weapon for a more civilised age. For over a thousand generations the Jedi Knights were the guardians of peace and justice in the Old Republic. Before the dark times, before the Empire.

Luke: How did my father die?

Obi-Wan: A young Jedi named Darth Vader, who was a pupil of mine until he turned to evil, helped the Empire hunt down and destroy the Jedi Knights. He betrayed and murdered your father. Now the Jedi are all but extinct. Vader was seduced by the dark side of the Force.

Luke: The Force?

Obi-Wan: Now, the Force is what gives a Jedi his power. It’s an energy field created by all living things. It surrounds us and penetrates us. It binds the galaxy together.

LIKE
THIS,
WATCH
THIS



PREDATOR 2

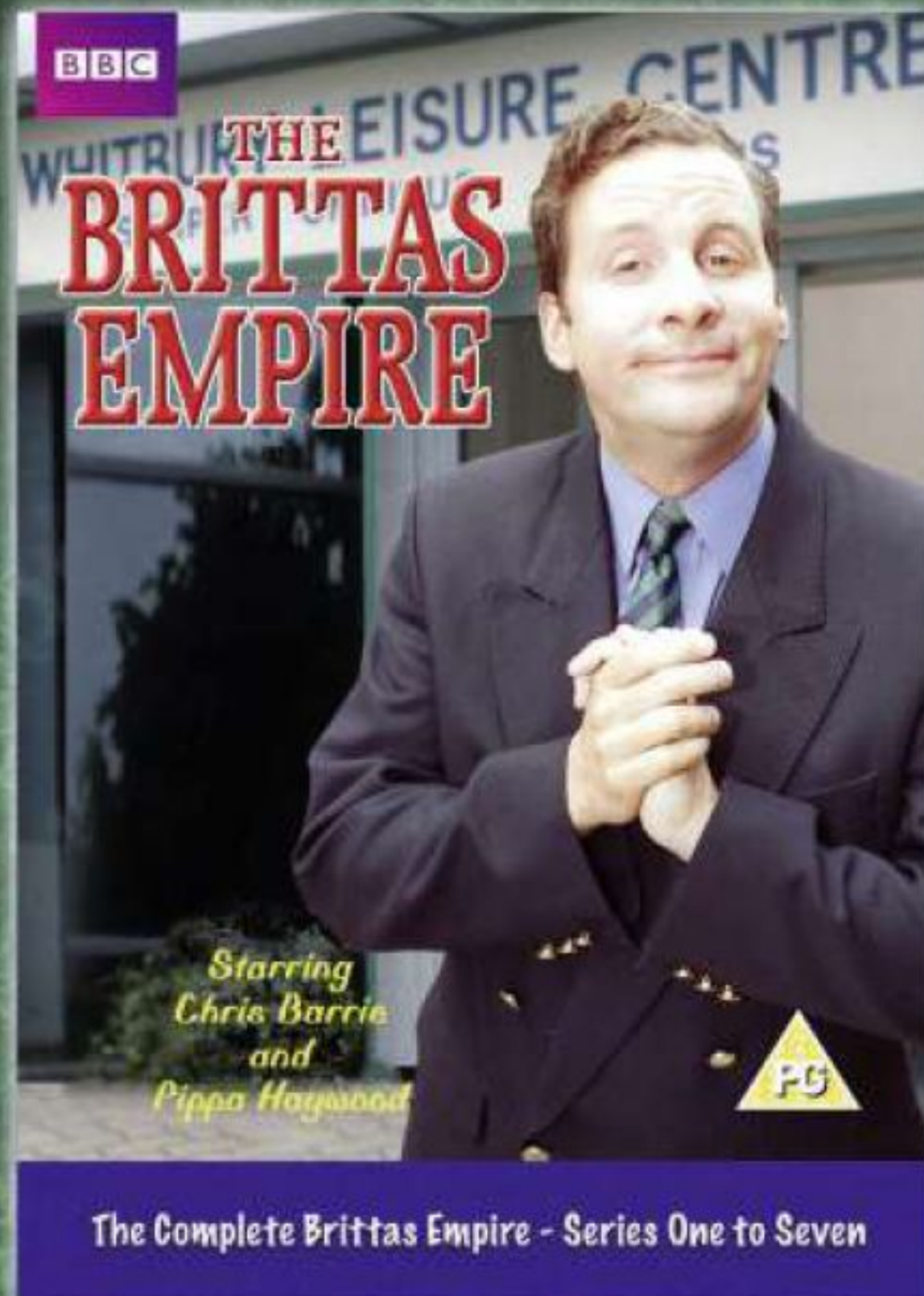
(1990)

Danny Glover is gifted an ancient pistol by an impressed Predator. Its elaborate backstory is documented in comic book *Predator: 1718*.

EUREKA!

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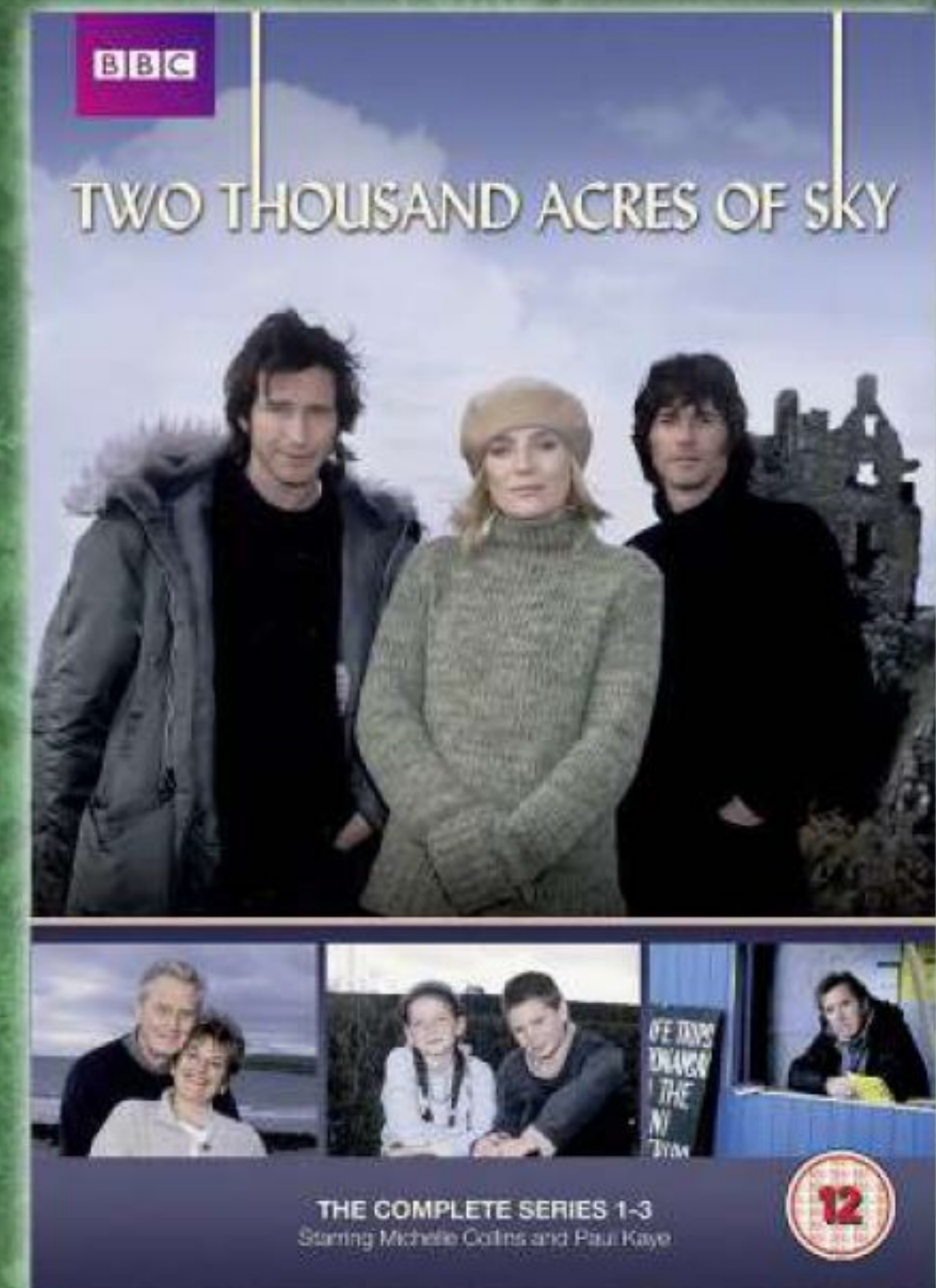
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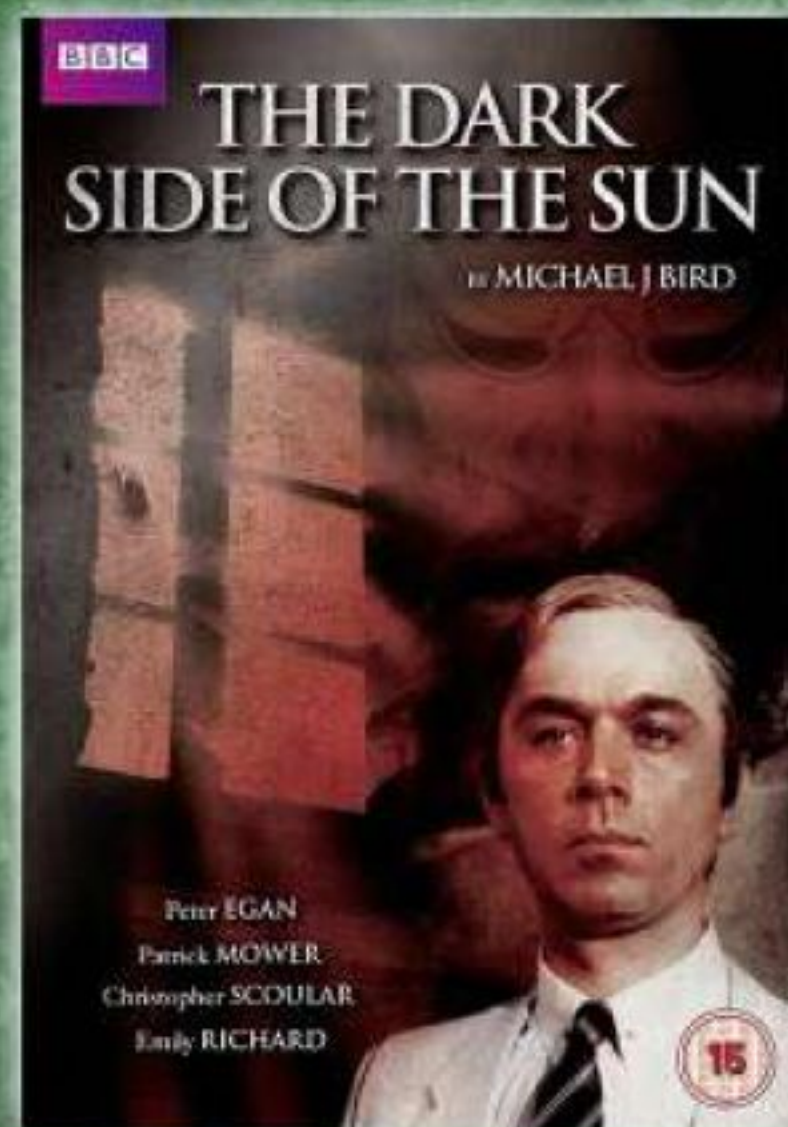
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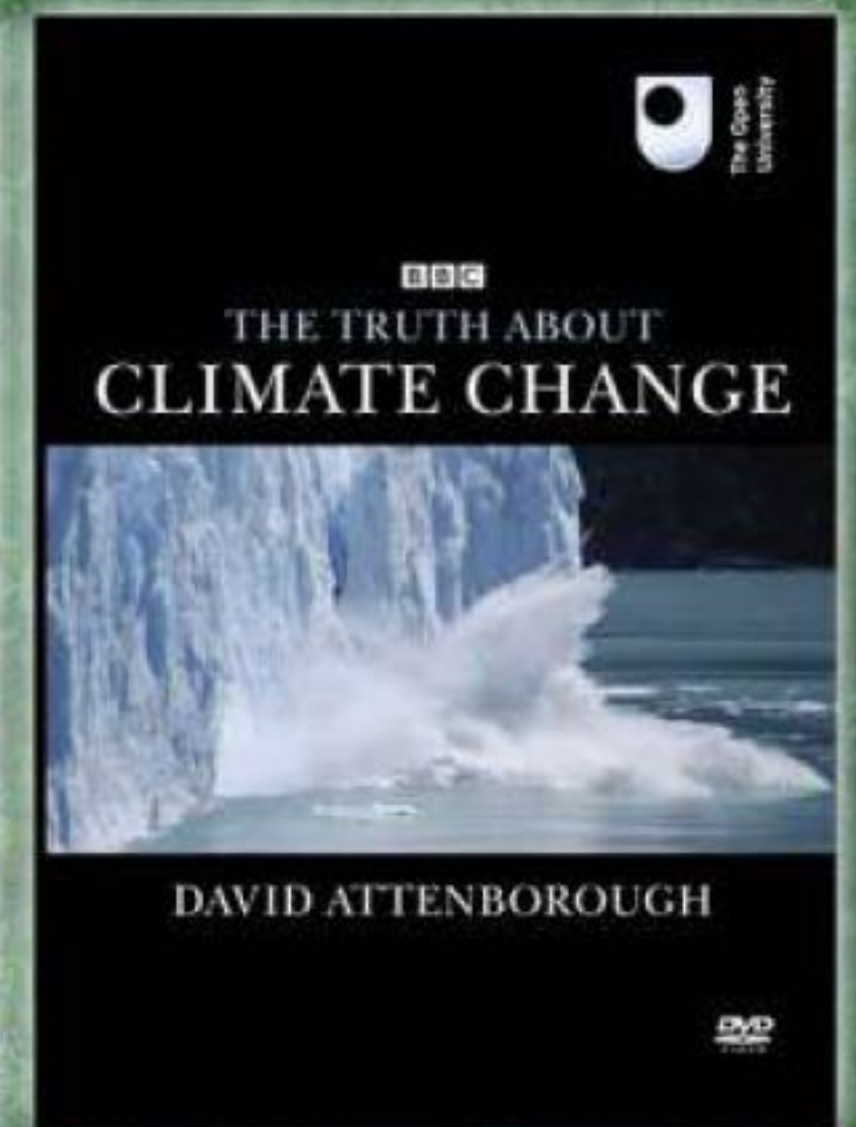
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